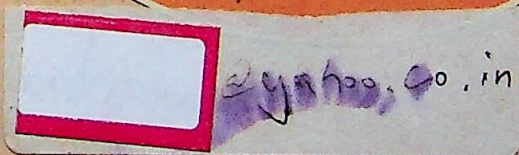


BHAKTI schools of Vedānta

Lives and
Philosophies of
RĀMĀNUJA, NIMBĀRKA,
MĀDHVA, VALLABHA
and CAITANYA



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Swami Tapasyananda

Generally Vedānta is identified with the exposition of the system by Śrī Śaṅkārācārya and the followers of his tradition. An attempt is made in this book to treat in a brief compass the life and teachings of five other Ācāryas who differ from Śaṅkara and interpret Vedānta as essentially a system concerned with a God having infinite auspicious attributes, whose grace alone can give salvation to the Jivas involved in the cycle of births and deaths (Samsāra). They are in no way less deserving recognition than Śrī Śaṅkara as Ācāryas of Vedānta, as they all base their teachings on the three foundational texts of the system — the Upanishads, the Vedāntasūtras and the Bhagavad Gita.

The teachings of these five schools have mutual differences, just as they have common differences from that of Śrī Śaṅkara. The Vedānta may as a consequence appear as a plethora of contradictions. The drift of this book in its Introduction is to show that it is not so in the light of the experiences of Ramakṛṣṇa-Vivekananda.

BHAKTI SCHOOLS OF VEDĀNTA

(Lives and Philosophies of
Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva,
Vallabha and Caitanya)

by
Svāmī Tapasyānanda



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Mylapore, Madras 600 004

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PREFACE

Vedānta is generally identified with the system of Advaita associated with Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. To remove this wrong notion by providing information to the general reader about the lives and doctrines of the other Ācāryas, who have an equal status as Teachers of Vedānta, is the object of this book.

The personages treated in this book are Śrī Rāmānuja, Śrī Nimbārka, Śrī Vallabha, Śrī Madhva and Śrī Caitanya. While their theo-philosophies will be of special interest to philosophically minded readers, it should not be forgotten that their lives are of equal importance. For it is the support of their lives that gives more authority to their teachings than the philosophical writings of mere arm-chair philosophers. The frame-work of their lives are mainly historical, but most of the miraculous and extraordinary incidents included in them may largely be the projections of the pious imaginations of their followers. These too are to be respectfully received and not pooh-poohed as mere cock and bull stories. It is the way of the Indian mind to convey the idea that these Ācāryas were endowed with extraordinary divine powers. But for this extraordinary power in them, their teachings could not have survived through so many centuries influencing the lives of innumerable generations of men.

The contents of this book are not the result of the study of, and researches into, the original literature of these schools in Sāṅskṛit. It is based on authoritative books on them in English. Rāmānuja's life is based entirely on the English translation of the Bengali work of Svāmī Rāmākṛṣṇānanda, which is the only comprehensive work on the great Ācārya's life available at present. The doctrinal portions are based on the writings of Prof.

P.N. Śrīnivāsācārya, especially his books entitled 'The Philosophy of Viśiṣṭādvaita' and 'The Ethical Philosophy of the Gītā'; the profound exposition of the subject by Dr. J.B. Cārman in his book on 'The Theology of Rāmānuja'; and the lucid explanation of the doctrine as restated by Vedānta Deśika by Dr. S.M. Śrīnivāsācārya in his book entitled 'The Fundamentals of Viśiṣṭādvaita.'

The section on Nimbārka is based mainly on the thesis of Dr. J.N. Sinha entitled 'Philosophy of Nimbārka'.

For the account of Śrī Vallabhācārya's life and teachings, the author is indebted to Bhāi Maṇilāl Parekh's comprehensive work 'Śrī Vallabhācārya — Life, Teachings and Movement', as also to Dr. (Mrs.) Mṛdula J. Marfatia's research thesis 'Philosophy of Vallabhācārya'.

There was a great dearth of well-written English books on the realistic dualism of Śrī Madhvācārya till recent times. This has been largely remedied by the learned writings of Dr. B.N.K. Sarma. The philosophical section in this book on that school is mostly based on the following books of Dr. B.N.K. Sarma: 'Philosophy of Śrī Madhvācārya' Madhva's Teachings in his own Words', and his monumental in-depth and comparative study of the commentariēs of the three great Ācāryas — Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhva. Besides, B.A. Krishnaswamy Rao's 'Outlines of the Philosophy of Śrī Madhva, and Prof. K.T. Pandurangi's writings on the theme have been very helpful in the production of this book. The life of Śrī Madhva is entirely based on an English translation of Nārayaṇa Paṇḍita's 'Madhva-vijaya' in Sāṅskṛit.

Regarding Śrī Caitanya, his life is written on the basis of the information got from Jādunāth Sirkār's translation of the classical Bengali work of Kṛiṣṇa Dās Kavirāj, 'Caitanya-caritāmṛta'. The incidents of the early life of Caitanya at Navadvīp have been largely gathered from Bhāratīya Vidyā Bhavan's abridged edition of Śiśir Kumār

Ghoṣ's Bengali work 'Lord Gaurāṅga'. The sad incidents connected with the disappearance of Śrī Caitanya are taken from the brochure of Prof. Aśok Chatterjee Śāstri based on his researches. The section on the Acintya Bheda-bheda Philosophy of this school is based mainly on the learned articles on the subject in the volumes of the 'Cultural Heritage of India' published by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, as also on the expositions in the above mentioned books on Caitanya.

By the very nature of the book, which conveys only second hand information on the themes, it is likely to have many errors from the point of view of specialists. It may also have several repetitions, as the back-ground philosophy which necessitated the rise of these schools, is the same. The author craves the indulgence of the readers for these failings.

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1.1.90

KEY TO TRANSLITERATION AND PRONUNCIATION

Sounds like

अ	a	o in son
आ	ā	a in master
इ	i	i in if
ई	ī	ee in feel
उ	u	u in full
ऊ	ū	oo in boot
ऋ	r̥	somewhat between r an ri
ए	e	ay in May
ऐ	ai	y in my
ओ	o	o in oh
औ	au	ow in now
क	k	k in keen
ख	kh	ckh in blockhead
ग	g	g (hard) in go
घ	gh	gh in ghee
ङ	ṅ	ng in singer
च	c	ch (not k) chain
छ	ch	chh in catch him
ज	j	j in judge
झ	jʰ	dgeh in hedgehog
ञ	ñ	n (somewhat) as in French
ट	ṭ	t in ten

Sounds like

ठ	ṭh	th in ant-hill
ड	ḍ	d in den
ढ	ḍh	dh in godhood
ण	ṇ	n in under
त	t	t in French
थ	th	th in thumb
द	d	th in then
ध	dh	then in breathe
न	n	n in not
प	p	p in pen
फ	ph	ph in loop-hole
ब	b	b in bag
भ	bh	bh in abhor
म	m	m in mother
य	y	y in yard
र	r	r in run
ल	l	l in luck
व	v	v in avert
श	ś	sh in reich (German)
ष	ṣ	sh in show
स	s	s in sun
ह	h	in hot
	m̐	m in sum
	h̐	h in half

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The Glory of Bhakti

Definition of Bhakti (Śrī Madhva)

*Māhātmya-jñāna-pūrvas tu sudṛḍhaḥ sarvato'dhikah
snehah bhaktiḥ iti proktaḥ tayā muktir na cā'nyathā*

Firm, ceaseless and unshakable love of God, which surpasses every other form of affection and attachment, and which is based on and inspired by a full knowledge of His transcendent majesty, is called Bhakti; by that alone does one attain liberation — by no other means

Means to Bhakti (Bhāgavata)

*Śravaṇam kīrtanam Viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam pādasevanam
arcanam vandanam dāsyam sakhyam ātmanivedanam
iti pumsārpiṭā Viṣṇau bhaktiś ced navalakṣaṇā
kriyate bhagavatyaaddhā tat manye'dhītam uttamam.*

The practice of devotion takes the following nine forms: hearing about God, singing about His greatness, remembering Him, serving Him through the service of all beings as His embodiments, worshipping Him in holy images, paying obeisance to Him, practising the attitude of a servant towards Him, cultivating loving intimacy with Him, and surrendering one's body, mind and soul to Him. A person who offers this ninefold offering of devotion to the Lord, in truth and in spirit, is indeed a well-educated person.

Total Dedication (Bhāgavata)

*Kāyena vācā manas'endriyair vā
buddhy'ātmanā vā'nusṛta svabhāvāt
karoti yad yat sakalam parasmai
Nārāyaṇāy'eti samarpayet tat.*

Whatever is done according to one's natural capacity by one's body, words, mind, senses, Buddhi, and the self — all that should be dedicated to Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Being.

Bhakti superior to Mukti (Bhāgavata)

*Rājan patir gurur alam bhavatām yadūnām
daivam priyaḥ kulapatiḥ kva ca kinkaro vā
astv'evam aṅga bhajatām bhagavān mukundo
muktim dadāti karhicit na hi bhakti-yogam.*

O King! Lord Kṛṣṇa has been to you of the Pāṇḍu's race and to the Yādavas — the master, respected teacher, deity for worship, leader, dear friend, and even a servant sometimes. Indeed, among those who worship Him, the Lord may grant Mukti (liberation) sometimes, but rarely Bhakti (devotion).

INTRODUCTION

WHY BHAKTI SCHOOLS OF VEDĀNTA ORIGINATED

The scope of this work

The teachings of the Bhakti schools of Vedānta and the lives of the Ācāryas who expounded them systematically, are given in some detail in the different chapters of this work. The object of doing so is this: There is a popular tendency to identify Vedānta with the writings of Śrī Śaṅkara exclusively. This tendency is not quite justifiable. All Ācāryas who have written commentaries on the Upaniṣads, Vedānta Sūtras and the Bhagavad Gītā are Ācāryas of the Vedānta. There are several such others, besides Śaṅkara, and their most distinguishing feature is their insistence on devotion to a Personal Deity with auspicious attributes as the means of salvation and the Jīva's distinction from that Deity in bondage as well as in salvation. There are several other subsidiary differences arising from this. They are not, however, mentioned here for fear of repetition.

The question, however, will arise whether Śaṅkara's interpretation of the Vedānta alone is not sufficient even for those who cherish devotion to a Personal Deity with auspicious attributes. Many find it is sufficient, but several others may not. It is for this reason that within three centuries after Śrī Śaṅkara, the voice of dissent was heard from Bhāskara and afterwards by a succession of Vaiṣṇava teachers headed by Śrī Rāmānuja. It is the lives and teachings of these dissenting Ācāryas that are embodied in this volume entitled 'Bhakti Schools of Vedānta'. The accounts given are from the phenomenalistic way of studying religions — that is, from the point of view of their followers and not of critics. Hence no attempt is made here to give any ontological or value judgements on these systems of thought.

Naturally these teachings will contain radical criticisms of Śaṅkara's philosophy, not because it has become outdated and irrelevant, but because criticism is the essence of philosophical development, as each successive school is either a rejection or an elaboration of the doctrines propounded earlier. All these systems are addressed to those who do not find a congenial intellectual climate in Śaṅkara's teachings.

The credit and debit sides of Advaita Vedānta

It has to be explained why Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta satisfied some while it fails to satisfy the advocates of these Bhakti Vedānta Philosophers. In this connection, it must be noted that Śaṅkara's system can stand on its own feet as pure metaphysics without the help of any theology, unlike these later systems. So those who prefer a philosophy to a theology will have a natural leaning towards Śaṅkara. But at the same time the rarefied atmosphere of Śaṅkara's metaphysics is too much for their human heart and lung to stand. For such persons Śaṅkara's system also provides theologies as a *provisional* stand-point — just a base camp for those attempting to climb the Mount Everest of Advaita. And the beauty is that not one particular theology, but any number of them can be fitted into the frame work of Śaṅkara's metaphysics *provisionally*. This wonderfully accommodating power of his doctrine is perhaps the most attractive feature of his philosophy to many of its followers.

An elucidation of the way in which it is done as also of the shortcoming of that method, is also necessary. Śaṅkara's philosophy has two tiers — that of the metaphysical (Paramārtha) level, and that of the *prima facie* and pragmatic (Vyavahāra) level. To some extent they correspond respectively to the Mount Everest and the base camp we have alluded to earlier. All theologies accommodated in Śaṅkara's Advaita system have only this

provisional status. They are relevant so long as man experiences this world of multiplicity revealing in its structure wonderful intelligence and design, and seeks for a First Cause in explanation of it. This First Cause is the God of theologies. He is Aparā Brahman — a lower version of the Supreme Being identifiable with any of the Deities of the Indian pantheon such as Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devi etc. The God of foreign religions like Islam and Christianity can also be accommodated in Śaṅkara's system in the same way at the level of provisional reality. He may be conceived as with an Archetypal form or without any form. In Indian religious sects He is always with form, as form is needed to complete this personalistic conception. One who has all the blessed attributes and an identity must have an Archetypal form also. For, attributes without a form to inhere in, cannot be conceived.

But it must be remembered that this accommodation is *provisional* like the base camp, and to be a true follower of Śaṅkara, one has to leave it and ascend to the metaphysical level at the earliest. If one remains satisfied with the provisional position, he will be like one remaining eternally at the base camp, far away from the peak of Truth, the metaphysical level. In some places in his commentaries he expresses his utter contempt for such philosophers and excludes them from the community of true Advaitins.

As most of his writings are in the shape of commentaries on scriptural passages, it is very difficult to pinpoint what his true stance is. He comments on both devotional passages as also on purely Advaitic passages without clarifying which is of pure metaphysical (Pāramārthika) import and which of provisional (Vyāvahārika) import.

Paṇḍitāpasadas and Mūrkhās

In his commentary on V.2 of Ch.XIII of the Bhagavad Gītā, he makes a clear statement advocating the necessity

of moving to the metaphysical level and expressing his contempt for those who rest at the provisional level, believing that it is sufficient for sálvation to worship and meditate on God. A partial abridgement of that part of the Bhāṣya interspersed with relevant quotations will make the matter clear.

In interpreting the above mentioned Gītā passage “Know me to be the Field-knower (Kṣetrajña) also, present in all Fields (Kṣetras),” he points out that Kṣetrajña generally understood as the Jivātman (the soul intuited in all body-minds as the ‘I’) is in *truth* identical with Īśvara, the Supreme Being. Then follows an elaborate dialectical dissertation in which he establishes his thesis of the identity of the Jīva with Īśvara and the need of absolute abstinence from action and attachments in the case of one who wants to realise this identity.

Next he makes an enquirer put a question, referring to persons who accept this position but behave contrarily: “How is it that the learned (Paṇḍitas) also feel that ‘I am so and so’, ‘This is mine’ etc. like all Samsāris?” He replies slighting such learning, “Listen! This indeed is their learning (Pāṇḍitya)! It consists in seeing the Self exclusively in the Field (body). Had they really perceived the immaculate Field-knower, they would not have hankered after worldly experiences and actions in pursuit of them.....”.

Next with an expression of absolute contempt for those who accept his Paramārtha level but yet depend on worship and adoration of God for the attainment of salvation, he remarks as follows:

“There is yet another type of learning (Pāṇḍitya). These so-called learned men affirm: ‘The Field-knower (Kṣetrajña) is God alone. The Field is entirely different from Him forming the object of His perception. But as for me, I am a transmigrator (Samsārī), happy or unhappy. My objective is to attain freedom from transmigration by the knowledge

of the Field and the Field-Knower by realising the Field-Knower by meditation and dwelling in the true nature of the Lord.' He who thinks thus is the meanest type of scholar (Paṇḍitāpasada) who egotistically assigns a novel sense to the state of bondage and liberation and to the scripture. He is a self-destroyer (Ātmahā). Himself deluded, he deludes others: for he has not had the discipline of the right tradition of scriptural knowledge (Asampradāya-vid). He is guilty of rejecting what is taught and dogmatically constructing something novel. Hence, one who is thus ignorant of right traditions, even though he is versed in all scriptures, deserves to be rejected as an ignoramus (Mūrkhavād)."

This characterisation will truly be appropriate in regard to all who vehemently profess themselves to be Advaitins, but continue to be satisfied with ritualism, meditation, worship and prayers as the means for salvation. For, to assert the unreality of ignorance can alone give enlightenment according to Advaita. On the contrary such Advaitins as are referred to in the above criticism, are asserting the positive nature of ignorance through their action. Hence the virulent attack of the Ācārya on them. Such must be the significance of this passage. They alone are Asampradāya-vids and Mūrkhas and not the followers of other systems of Vedānta. For the former, in place of lighting the match stick to remove darkness, are only wallowing in darkness. Jñāna-vicāra or the discriminative process of denying the difference between the Jīva and Īśvara by ridding them both of their Upādhis or adjuncts is the spiritual practice for them. They alone are the true Sampradāyavids or knowers of the right Advaitic tradition.

Patronising attitude of Advaita Vedānta

From this it is plain that in the scheme of Saṅkara's Advaita there is no honourable place for those who hold to the view that ignorance causing Samsāra and freedom

from it are real and that adoration of God and seeking His grace form the one effective means for salvation. A seeker strenuously struggling in the practice of spiritual Sādhana is told that in *truth* he is engaged only in a mock battle in the light of the two tier theory of reality, that he has to abandon his way of Sādhana in favour of the Pāramārthika type, or for the sake of integrity and harmony between the intellect and the heart, seek a different world view which will provide a theo-philosophical scaffolding suited to erect his spiritual edifice — one which saves him from the ludicrousness of engaging himself in a mock battle.

The Bhakti-Vedānta systems of thought expounded in these pages along with the lives of their illustrious promulgators can provide such an alternative mould for spiritual aspirants who feel that Samsāra is real, liberation must be real, and worship and meditation are not mock battles, and who therefore accept a God, not as a provisional, but as the Ultimate Reality — merciful and gracious, the seat of all auspicious attributes — by whose grace alone one can be freed from the bondage of Samsāra.

The philosophy of Advaita is however very accommodating and gives a place for every kind of aspirants. Even the followers of these Paṇḍitāpasadas (Pseudo-scholars) are accommodated in spite of the contempt shown towards them. They are called Mandādhikāris or dull-witted aspirants of inferior competency. They are patronisingly permitted to dwell in the cosy base camp of the Vyāvahārika status and told that their Sādhanas are not *mere* mock-battles if they are done with the idea of gaining Citta-suddhi or purification of mind, which is needed to enter into the Pāramārthika or metaphysical level of Reality. They are mock-battles only if they are considered sufficient to take them to the spiritual summum bonum. When purification of the mind is obtained, they have to practise abiding in the state of Jñāna or unitary consciousness in which there is no place for a God of

adoration. In place of adoration he has to dwell on the oneness of the Self with Brahman, denying the positive nature or actuality of ignorance and all the experience of multiplicity arising from it. This means acceptance of the doctrine of the *non-existence of God, bondage and the world of multiplicity even when they are being experienced*. This is what the doctrine of sublation (Bādha), so important in Advaita Vedānta, means. No Bhakti Vedāntin will be ready to accept such a position.

Now all those who are satisfied with the position of being Mandādhikāris and with a God for adoration as a provisional reality only, will find Śaṅkara's Advaita absolutely satisfying. For their benefit Śrī Śaṅkara has instituted the Pañcāyatana-pūja or worship of the five aspects of the Deity — Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devī, Āditya and Gaṇeśa. He has composed hymns on them and either founded or renovated temples dedicated to them. Through these devotional works of his he has an all-pervasive influence in India, and wherever one goes in this country from Kanyākumārī to the Himālayas, one will hear an anecdote or find some monument or temple connected with him.

In the field of Indian philosophy his rank is number one. Westerners who are interested in him are interested mainly in Śaṅkara the philosopher. Indian academicians and also dilettanti in philosophy are mostly concerned with this aspect of his thought. That aspect is mainly concerned with the Paramārtha and it does not touch the religious or secular parts of the lives of the classes mentioned above. Most of such philosophers will, however, have to be classed as Mandādhikāris or Paṇḍitāpasadas. For no man who has worldly attachments and a feeling of his own weakness can rise to the Pāramārthik or metaphysical level. Perhaps among Sannyāsins who live an exclusively contemplative life, there may be some who practise the Pāramārthika discipline — that is, leave the base camp and march towards the Everest peak.

Bhakti Vedāntin's claim to excellence

Now among scholars (Paṇḍitas) and even among those who are humble devotees, there are many who are not satisfied with the status of Manda-buddhis (men of low understanding and competency). Such dissatisfaction is natural with persons with keen self-respect. The Vedānta, even that of Śaṅkara, gets its data mainly from the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad Gīta along with the first systematisation of these teachings in the aphoristic literature called Brahma-sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa. These are supplemented by the Purāṇas and Itihāsas. While reason has a place in Vedānta, it is not the freelance type of reason, but reason disciplined by, and applied to, the interpretation of the data provided by the Vedāntic scriptures. In such interpretation all the Ācāryas are expected and in fact claim to follow the method of Vedic exegesis adapted by the Mīmāṃsakas and the grammatical rules and etymology provided by Yaska's Nirukta.

Now the Ācāryas dealt with in this book are all not mere armchair philosophers, but great men — great in intelligence and great in the sublimity of their lives. It is to show this that somewhat detailed accounts of their lives have been given along with their teachings.

According to the understanding of them all, the Veda does not make a distinction between the Absolute (Brahman) and God (Īśvara) or equate the Jīva with Brahman. They hold that the Vedāntic scriptures reveal an ultimately real God with infinite auspicious attributes, that Samsāra and liberation are real, and that spiritual Sādhana is not a mock battle but a real and earnest striving. Above all they maintain that divine grace is the main factor in the liberation of the Jīva from Samsāra. All these spiritual disciplines are meant not merely for purification of mind, but directly for the attainment of salvation. In their metaphysics they maintain that a subject and an object are the irreducible minimum in experience, and that a subject-objectless

existence without attributes is either a metaphysical fiction or at the most a Nihil (a Śūnya). Sense perception is not a subjective projection or an illusory appearance, but an apprehension of something having an objective counterpart forming a segment of reality. All these ideas, which go counter to Śaṅkara's metaphysics and religion, they justify by reason supported by scriptural statements which they claim to interpret in the light of Mīmāṃsa rules of interpretation, as Śaṅkara too does.

While their writings have plenty of metaphysics, they are equally theologies, as they all identify Īśvara or Brahman with Viṣṇu, who has a particular Archetypal form and an eternal Abode, and who at the same time is all-pervading within the whole cosmos as also in every part of it and in every Jīva as the Jīva's soul. This makes them monotheists with an inherent exclusiveness, which they think is very necessary and justifiable. Therefore they are not as accommodating as Śaṅkara's Advaitic theism which does not identify itself exclusively with any cult and bans none. Though many may consider this exclusiveness of these theo-philosophies of Bhakti Vedāntins as unsatisfactory and objectionable, no one who has read their works will subscribe to the view that they are Paṇḍitāpasadas (mean and despicable scholars) or Mūrkhas (ignoramuses). For centuries their doctrines and their lives have received the attention of the intellectual elite and of the masses, and it is sure that this will continue also through numberless centuries to come.

Now are they Asampradāya-vids — persons who do not know, or belong to, any spiritual tradition. They may not belong to the tradition of interpretation that Śaṅkara represents, and in that sense may be termed Asampradāya-vids. But they have their own traditions. Rāmānuja, for example, follows the philosophic tradition of Bodhāyana-vṛtti and the devotional tradition of the Ālvars. Vallabha claims to follow Ṛṣi Kaundinya, Viṣṇuswami and

the special revelation he himself got from the Divine. Madhva asserts that he got his instruction directly from Vyāsa. The Vedānta Sūtras themselves mention three traditions of Vedānta — those of Audalomi, Aśmaratya and Kāśakṛtsna. So the claim of Bhakti Ācaryas that they are following their own traditions cannot be disputed.

According to A.K. Majumdar's work on Caitanya, the Sampradāya or the tradition of spiritual descent from teacher to disciple of the different schools of Vedānta is as follows:-

Advaita (of Śaṅkara):

Vyāsa — Śuka — Gauḍapāda — Govindapāda — Śaṅkara.

Śrīvaiṣṇavism (of Rāmānuja):

Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa — Śrī or Lakṣmī — Viṣvaksena — Satakopa — Nāthamuni — Puṇḍarīkākṣa — Rāmamiśra — Yāmuna — Mahāpūrṇa — Rāmānuja.

Hamsa-sampradāya (of Nimbārka):

Viṣṇu as Hamsa — Brahmā — Kumāras — Nārada — Nimbārka.

Rudra-sampradāya (of Vallabha):

Viṣṇu — Rudra — Viṣṇusvāmī — Vallabha.

Brahma-sampradāya (of Madhva):

Viṣṇu — Brahmā — Vasiṣṭha — Śakti — Parāśara — Vyāsa — Pūrṇaprajña or Madhva.

Caitanya's-sampradāya

This cannot be definitely fixed. See Foot Note.*

* According to A.K. Majumdar, it is difficult to establish Caitanya's spiritual tradition. As far as his Sannyāsa was concerned, Keśava Bhāratī was his Guru. He should therefore have given the suffix of Bhāratī, which is obviously one of the sects of Advaitins. So Keśava Bhāratī might not have
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Vedānta, a theo-philosophy

This brings us to the question that, if Vedānta is based upon scriptures and traditions, should it be called a philosophy or a theology. Indian scholars of modern times are very particular to maintain that it is a philosophy under the idea that it gives Vedānta a more dignified status than when it is classed as a theology. But Western writers invariably call Vedānta a theology and do not give it a place in the faculty of philosophy in academic circles, as it is based on scriptural interpretation. Neither of these designations is correct. Vedānta is above all, a Darśana, a world-view. It is ultimately based on experience, and its scriptures claim that the doctrines given by them are records of experiences which can be had today as they were in the past.

In this respect the Vedāntic scriptures differ from those of Christianity or Islam. Christianity is based upon some life incidents of one whom its followers dogmatically claim

given him full initiation into the Advaita-sampradāya. In view of his extraordinary devotion to Kṛṣṇa he named him Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. Caitanya is also indicative of one accepting the preliminary stage to Sannyāsa, and so Keśava Bhārati might have both these ideas in giving him this particular title. His real affinity is therefore with Īśvara Puri who initiated him into Prema-Bhakti for Kṛṣṇa. Īśvara Puri was a disciple of Mādhvendra Puri and was practising Prema-Bhakti for Kṛṣṇa. He was the first to introduce Bhakti among Sannyāsins. Now the suffix Puri is also one given to Sannyāsins of Śaṅkara's Advaita System. So Mādhvendra Puri must have been one converted into the Bhakti cult during his pilgrimages, probably in the South. It was Bāla-deva who, later in the 18th Century, wrote the commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras for the Caitanya sect, that brought the sect into the frame-work of Madhva's dualism through that commentary. But really Caitanya's doctrines, as conceived and interpreted by his Brindāvan Goswāmī disciples, was far different from the radical dualism of Madhva. These Goswāmīs called their philosophy as Advaya-vada or Acintya-bhedā-bheda (a brand of identity-in-difference). Beside, the practice of Prema-Bhakti based on conjugal relationship was not favoured by Madhva, while that is the main theme of Caitanya's life and teachings. So the aim of Bāla-deva in affiliating Caitanyaism with Madhva's Vedānta must have only been for giving the system an orthodox place among the Schools of Vedānta.

to be the Second Person of the Trinity. Their scripture records teachings which are educative and elevating no doubt, but salvation for a Christian depends on the historicity of Christ and faith in the atoning power of his sacrifice on the Cross. These are not experiences that can be had but only beliefs entertained like the traditions of the Purāṇas. So they are entirely different from the data given in the Upaniṣads, which are realisable today as they have been at any time in the past. So all Vedāntic doctrines are philosophies, but only as modified by theologies to the extent they identify themselves with any cult and depend on interpretation of passages. It is in this respect that Śaṅkara's system of Advaita scores a point over all other Vedāntic systems and has received recognition all the world over as *the* Vedānta. It is a philosophy, but accommodating enough for any theology to exist under its aegis. Bhakti Vedānta systems are not so. Though they have developed very recondite metaphysical systems, they are inextricably dependent on their cult-Deity Viṣṇu. It is therefore better for Indian academicians not to claim that Vedānta is a philosophy but to hold that it is a theo-philosophy, thus justifying its affiliations to both philosophy and theology.

Need for the Synthesis of Vedāntic Schools

There is still another question that deserves an answer. When there are different schools of Vedānta, as depicted herein, besides that of Śaṅkara, and when they all invoke the Upaniṣads as their authority and also claim to follow the same code of Vedic exegesis — does not that authority, the Upaniṣads, which are revered and accepted as revelation, reduce itself to an absurdity because of the radically different and sometimes conflicting nature of the meanings derived from them by different schools of Vedānta? In fact Śaṅkarācārya himself has, in his criticism of Buddhism, slashed down its authority, namely, the teachings of the Buddha, on this very ground of internal contradictions leading to contradictory philosophies. In his *Brahmasūtra*

Bhāṣya, after giving the position of the four systems of Buddhist philosophy, inculcating realism, idealism, and nihilism, and after refuting them, he concludes that the Tathāgata who indulged in such mutually contradictory teachings must have been either a fool or a knave — a fool in case he unknowingly preached contradictions or a knave if he preached these purposely to confuse people and send them to their doom.

Now Śaṅkara interpreted the Upaniṣads and showed the consistency of their teachings in his own way and thought that he had built an unbreakable concrete wall protecting Vedānta from every kind of assault from within or without. But when these Bhakti schools of Vedānta emerged criticising his metaphysics devastatingly, basing themselves on the very same Upaniṣads that formed his authority, then these expectations of his were belied. The authority of the Vedānta has thus become exposed to the very same kind of criticism which Śaṅkara directed against Buddhism.

Vādirāja, a famous polemical exponent of Dvaita-Vedānta, seems to anticipate such a criticism against Vedānta and the Upaniṣads as a whole from this mutual wrangling among Vedāntic sects. As an answer to such a challenge he maintains that all the followers of the Vedas will stand together against such a threat. But his claim remains a mere boast, as no such unified position has yet been spelt by the warring sects, among whom the Mādhva Vedāntins have proved to be the most bellicose.

There is also the question whether the way followed in the past by the Ācāryas of interpreting the scriptures as having only one meaning agreeing with their Sampradāya or tradition, is satisfactory or not. The establishment or discovery of Eka-vākyatā or unity of purport of scriptural words and passages, as in the case of the words in a sentence, was the ideal set before them by the old scriptural exegetists. To make it more explicit, a sentence is not a mere conglomeration of words. It consists of words arranged

in a way that yields a unified meaning. Scriptures also are like that in regard to their total import. Keeping such an ideal in view, the Ācāryas following each Sampradāya considered the meaning of a scripture as fixed by its teacher as its only possible unified meaning. If a scripture is only the composition of a logician, this idea about it can be correct. Even a grammarian will differ in this respect. A grammarian can give a sentence different interpretations conveying different meanings. Much more so is it in regard to the compositions of poets. A poet's composition can be many-faceted. Some compositions of great poets like Kālidāsa or Shakespeare can amply prove this. If God is comparable in any respect to these three categories of logicians, grammarians and poets, one will have to vote in favour of the last. The Upaniṣads call God Kavi — 'a word meaning 'a wise being'', but also applied to poets, as all wise men in the past expressed themselves in poetry. If great poems can yield different shades of meaning, how much more so must be a revelation of the Supreme Being. A revelation can be compared to a piece of sugar-cane. It yields a little juice to a child, much more to one with strong teeth, and still more to a crushing mill. If it were otherwise, a revelation serves a narrow purpose only. Its purpose ceases to be making supersensual matters clear to the unsophisticated aspirants but providing grist to the grinding mills of grammarians and interpreters. It is not that grammar and rules of interpretations are absolutely unnecessary. They have their place, but they should not be used for text-torturing and giving narrow and exclusive stances to scriptures.

Even according to Vedic savants, the Veda can be interpreted from three standpoints — the Ādhibautika, Ādhidaivika, and Adhyātma. Regarding Vedāntic traditions also, mention is made of three teachers whose theories of relation between Brahman and Jīva are very much like those of the three great Ācāryas. Audalomi holds that the soul

is different from Brahman in the state of bondage, but becomes one with Him in liberation as the water of a river becomes one with the ocean when it flows into the sea. According to Āśmaratya even in bondage the soul is different and non-different from Brahman, as a ray of light is in relation to the sun. Kāśakṛtsna is of the view that Brahman residing in the heart is the controller and the soul is the controlled.

All these considerations indicate that the time has come for a rethinking among Vedāntins. They should not merely be the valiant defenders of their own Sampradāyas (traditions) and refuters of those of others. The Upaniṣads, the common authority of all, contain passages which teach all the doctrines of Śaṅkara excepting perhaps the *Sad-asat-anir-vacanīya avidyā-māyā* (Avidyā-Māyā which cannot be determined as existent or non-existent), which is a device improvised by him to reconcile the One with the many without tarnishing the non-duality of the One. Many impartial scholars also doubt whether the Upaniṣads sanction clearly the theory of two tiers of reality of Paramārtha and Vyavahāra and the doctrines of falsity denoted by Anirvacanīya-Khyāti Vāda. The Bhakti Vedāntins' doctrine of an absolutely real Īśvara with auspicious attributes, creatorship, grace etc. is also in the Upaniṣads. But regarding philosophical theories as

Apṛthak-siddhi, Seṣa-seṣī, Sākṣī, Viśeṣa, Bheda etc. which are introduced by them to support their idea of One in the many in place of the one *sublating* the many — we hardly find them clearly enunciated in the Upaniṣads. That Viṣṇu in a particular form alone can be called Īśvara is their sectarian view for which they manufacture support from some passages of the Upaniṣads.

Reconciliation in Neo-Vedānta of Rāmakṛṣṇa-Vivekānanda

A reconciliation can be found only in the Neo-Vedānta which has come out of the life and teachings of Śrī

Rāmakṛṣṇa and his Vibhūti, Svāmī Vivekānanda. They have not written any commentaries on the foundational texts of Vedānta. Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa lived the whole gamut of the spiritual evolution of the human spirit and practised all the paths of adoration that aspirants have evolved. Thus his life lived in the broad day light of history is more valuable than any commentary. And he has in his wonderful talks with devotees given the outcome of his realisations unclouded and undistorted by adherence to any tradition exclusively.

His great disciple Svāmī Vivekānanda preached his Gospel all the world over in the light of modern ideologies. There is a mistaken view that Svāmī Vivekānanda was only an Advaitin, because most of the lectures he gave in the West were on Advaita doctrines. He gave the reason for it, when questioned by his intimate disciple Saratchandra Cakravarti. The people of the West, he said, were proud of their science and of their philosophies based on science and reason. They have to be shown that India has in the Vedānta a teaching embodying spiritual values, which is in agreement with the trends of science and rational cogitation. If he had expounded the Indian theo-philosophies or Bhakti system or the personal life of his Master, they would have felt that they have something to match with it in Christianity and did not require a missionary from India to teach parallel doctrines. To those who came to him closely with the intention of practising spiritual discipline, he spoke about Bhakti also according to their competency.* That Svāmī Vivekānanda has full acceptance of Bhakti Vedānta without its exclusiveness found in Indian sectaries, will be evident to any one who cares to read his talks on Bhakti Yoga and the Religion of Love.

He says in Bhakti Yoga (1983 Ed.) p.89 as follows.
 "The Upaniṣads distinguish between a higher knowledge and

* *Talks with Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, 4th Ed. p.32

a lower knowledge; and to the Bhaktas there is really no difference between this higher knowledge and his higher love (Parā-Bhakti)...The higher knowledge is the knowledge of the Brahman; and the Devī-Bhāgavata gives us the following definition of the higher love (Parā-Bhakti): "As oil poured from one vessel to another falls in an unbroken line, so, when the mind in an un-broken stream thinks of the Lord, we have what is called Parā-Bhakti or supreme love." This kind of undisturbed and ever-steady direction of the mind and heart to the Lord with an inseparable attachment, is indeed the highest manifestation of man's love to God. All other forms of Bhakti are only preparatory to the attainment of this highest form thereof, viz. the Parā-Bhakti which is also known as the love that comes after attachment (Rāgānuga). When this supreme love once comes into the heart of man, his mind will continuously think of God and remember nothing else. He will give no room in himself to thoughts other than those of God, and his soul will be unconquerably pure, and will alone break all the bonds of mind and matter and become serenely free. He alone can worship the Lord in his own heart. To him forms, symbols, books, and doctrines are all unnecessary and are incapable of proving serviceable in any way. It is not easy to love the Lord thus. Ordinarily human love is seen to flourish only in places where it is returned; where love is not returned for love, cold indifference is the natural result. There are, however, rare instances in which we may notice love exhibiting itself even where there is no return of love. We may compare this kind of love, for purpose of illustration, to the love of the moth for the fire; the insect loves the fire, falls into it, and dies. It is indeed in the nature of this insect to love so — to love because it is its nature to love. To love is undeniably the highest and the most unselfish manifestation that may be seen in the world. Such love, working itself out on the plane of spirituality, necessarily leads to the attainment of Parā-Bhakti.

Again he says: Those who aspire to retain their individual mind even after liberation and to remain distinct, will have ample opportunity of realising their aspirations and enjoying the blessing of the qualified Brahman...Those who attain to that state where there is neither creation, nor created, nor creator, where there is neither knower, nor knowable, nor knowledge, where there is neither I, nor thou, nor he, where there is neither subject, nor object, nor relation, 'there, who is seen by whom?' — such persons have gone beyond everything, to 'where words cannot go nor mind', gone to that which the Śrutis declare as "Not this, Not this"; but for those who cannot, or will not reach this state, there will inevitably remain the triune vision of the one undifferentiated Brahman as nature, soul, and the interpenetrating sustainer of both — Īśvara. So, when Prahlāda forgot himself, he found neither the universe nor its cause: all was to him one Infinite, undifferentiated by name and form; but as soon as he remembered that he was Prahlāda, there was the universe before him and with it the Lord of the universe — 'the Repository of an infinite number of blessed qualities'. So it was with the blessed Gopis. So long as they had lost sense of their own personal identity and individuality, they were all Kṛṣṇas, and when they began again to think of Him as the One to be worshipped then they were Gopis again, and immediately, as the Bhāgavata puts it: 'Unto them appeared Kṛṣṇa with a smile on His lotus face, clad in yellow robes and having garlands on — as the embodied conqueror (in beauty) of the god of love,...The idea of Īśvara covers all the ground ever denoted and connoted by the word real, and Īśvara is as real as anything else in the universe.

It will be noticed that in the above conception of Saviśeṣa (qualified) and Nirviśeṣa (unqualified) Brahman there is no idea of the sublation (Bādha) of the former. The experience is of the same Reality from different *frames of reference*, and both are equally real. The experience of

the Nirviśeṣa does not prove the figmentary (Prātibhāsika) nature of the Saviśeṣa. The fact is that when one is experienced the other is not, as in the case of the obverse and reverse of the same coin. This is not sublation, which means falsification. It implies only absorption in the experience, from different frames of reference, of the identical entity. If all the schools of Vedānta, including the classical Vedānta, come to accept this idea while interpreting their experience, Vedānta will have an honourable place among theo-philosophies.

As far as Advaita is concerned, Svāmī Vivekānanda changed it from Māyā-Vāda, which it had become in the hands of scholastics, into true Brahma-vāda; from a kind of dialectical metaphysics, he oriented it as a doctrine of the Divinity of every soul and the possibility of every one manifesting the Divinity by controlling Nature within and without. He bridged the gulf that classical Vedānta has built between Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti when he preached, as the teacher of the Gītā had done, that one's welfare is achieved through the welfare of all. To forget one's own salvation in the thought of the salvation of all, he preached as the ideal of an accomplished Vedāntin.

In the light Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa's life and experience, the medieval method of expounding Vedānta in the dialectical manner of the Pūrva-pakṣa (opposite view) and its refutation, followed by Siddhānta (the thesis), has become as much outdated as the still more ancient way of establishing the truth of religious communities through the use of swords and lances. Tribes fought under the banner of their deities, and the community that won the battle claimed that their deity was true. They destroyed the temples of the deities of the vanquished or deposed those deities and substituted their own. The dialectical method of establishing a doctrine follows the same logic. Only the shafts and weapons used are intellectual.

Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa and the Phenomenological study of religion

The study of comparative religion in the nineteenth century also followed the same method even after some idea of toleration developed in the West. Religions of the world were studied from the standpoint of Christianity and assessed, judged or refuted by measuring them with the Christian monotheistic standard. This has now given way to the phenomenological way of studying religions. This new method means that religions should be studied from within, as a believer in it understands and evaluates it, and not as a critic standing without. An alien religion is understood not by sitting in judgement over it, but by having an *empathy* for it. It is generally held that this outlook on the study of religion was introduced in the last decades of the 19th century by a group of eminent professors of historical and comparative religion, in certain universities of Netherlands. The names especially of P.D.Chantepie, Dela Saussaye, W. Brede Kristensen and G. Van der Leuw may be mentioned in this connection. Without questioning the factuality of this, it will be relevant to state that, taking into consideration the time at which this change of outlook came, the very great influence of Vedāntic thought on it cannot be over-ruled. Max Muller, Paul Deussen and other great Sanskritists had already produced valuable and authentic body of literature on Vedāntic Texts in Western languages. Above all the active preaching of Vedānta by Svāmī Vivekānanda after the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 in the light of the life and teachings of his Great Master Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa must have been a powerful influence on the current of thought in the West.

Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa lived the life of each religion to understand it. His method was thus not merely one of empathy or intellectual understanding like that of the modern scholars of comparative religion. It was more radical. It was the method of the live spirit — that of recapturing the

experienced verities having their source in the Supreme Spirit, unrefracted by sectarian leanings and prejudices that are given the dignified name of Sampradāyas (holy traditions). The genius of Neo-Vedānta lies in its apprehension of the Supreme Truth from different frames of reference and the acceptance of the equal validity of them all without accepting the exclusive claims of any. In the Supreme Being all dimensions combine and co-exist without any mutual conflict or contradiction. No seer can claim to have given an exhaustive exposition of Brahman. A world of meaning is embodied in a short pithy saying of Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa: The Supreme Brahman is like a mountain of sugar. Even the greatest of teachers like Śuka Deva are only like big ants carrying a big grain of it.

Another parable of his on the chameleon and the disputants about its colour, clarifies the position further. Seeing a chameleon on a tree several persons who had seen it only once or from one angle began to dispute about its colour — whether it was red or blue or yellow etc. They took into account only what they had seen of the creature, and each considered his experience of its colour as excluding the possibility of any other, as the unquestionable truth. Their dispute was referred to a man who was always sitting under the tree, from whose experience they came to understand that the chameleon had all these colours and that they exist in it without contradiction. What is more, the chameleon can also be completely colourless. The Saṁgha Brahman is also the Nirṅgha Brahman.

Such a doctrine is implied in the Upaniṣadic passage: “*Kastam madāmadam devam mad anyo jñātum arhati* — who else except me (the enlightened one) can understand that Deva who is at the same time *Sa-mada* (with Mada) and *A-mada* (without Mada) i.e. is the harmonious meeting ground of all contradictions.”

Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa as the Man Sitting under the Tree

Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa is the man sitting under the tree. We have to take his verdict based on experience if we are to rise above the discordance among Advaitism, the various theo-philosophies of India and other world religions. The mere interpretative and dialectical methods, based only on certain time-honoured scriptures, will carry us nowhere. By following them exclusively, we shall only fall into the trap of grammarians and rules of interpretation supposed to be fixed by unquestioned authority of Vedic exegetists (Mīmāṃsakas). It will only puzzle one with the question why, if God's intention in giving revelation was to clarify matters, He has in actuality only confused the issues.

Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa has been described by his great disciple Svāmī Abhedānanda as a *Sampradāya-vihīna* (one without any Sampradāya or traditional pre-conception), but at the same time one who does not criticise any Sampradāya (*Sampradāyam na nindati*). He can therefore be taken as the man sitting at the foot of the tree. For him the Impersonal Absolute does not sublate God, the Supreme Being of all schools of Bhakti Vedānta. The Impersonal and the Personal are like the ocean and the ice continent in it. They are of the same stuff in spite of the formless liquidity of the one and the contour-endowed solidity of the other. They are the obverse and the reverse of the same coin. The man seen differently as six feet and as three feet tall from different speeds with the same measuring rod expanded or contracted according to the speed, is the same man and the experiences from both the frames of reference co-exist in the same man without any contradiction.* According to Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa the

* For a full explanation of this idea, please refer to the article "*Relativity and Rāmakṛṣṇa*" by Svāmī Ātmapriyānanda given as Appendix.
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Akhandākāra Vṛtti or unmodified psychosis, which intuitively the subject-objectless Pure Consciousness, is only the Divine Mother revealing Her Impersonal Aspect. The Mother is not and cannot be sublated, as She and the Impersonal are one without a difference (the plural being used only because of the limitation of human language). The conception of sublation is eliminated in Neo-Vedānta.

Some Indian thinkers might feel that Śaṅkara's Advaita gives a place for such an attitude. If Paramārtha and Vyavahāra were not contradictory but complementary, this is a possible accommodation. But when the doctrine of sublation (Bādhā) of the Deity even, is emphatically articulated, one would feel that the door of such accommodation of these theo-philosophies is almost closed. But in Śrī Śaṅkara's doctrine such theologies, as already shown, are given an important place at the Vyavahārika level, which has been described as the base camp. They help the Citta-suddhi or purification and disciplining of the mind and they thus make one fit for the pure Advaitic discipline. Will the Bhakti schools of Vedāntins be satisfied with such a status? It is very doubtful, as could be found from the exposition of these schools given in the main body of this book. Bhakti for them is both the means and the end of spiritual endeavours. Except in a system of thought which gives an equal place for Bhakti, Karma and Jñāna and also for a Supreme Being who is both the Impersonal Absolute and the Personal God — the great creator with no hanging threat of the Damocles sword of sublation — a reconciliation is not possible. The phenomenalistic way of approach to the theo-philosophies, supplemented by the doctrine of different frames of reference, is the way of reconciliation. This is provided by Rāmakṛṣṇa-Vivekānanda ideology.

A possible criticism of this reconciling efficacy of Rāmakṛṣṇa-Vivekānanda ideology will be that it is done only through a ladder theory of the position of dualism,

qualified-monism and pure monism. The ladder theory means that they represent the lowest step, the middle step and the highest step respectively of the spiritual edifice. A critic of this theory has remarked that a ladder is the easiest thing to be turned upside down i.e. put in the reverse position. This has actually been attempted by a contemporary Mādhva philosopher Prof. Rāghavendrācār, who holds that the progress is from Advaita to Viśiṣṭādvaita and from that to Dvaita. In reply to such a criticism it is pertinent to remark that in the so-called ladder theory, the classical Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita and Advaita are not the steps. The steps are the various psychological stages in the progress of the spirit. First man in the earliest stage of development can think of God only as an extra-cosmic power to be feared and propitiated. As he develops, he comes to have a more intimate relation towards Him. The human mind begins to think of Him as a Father-Mother to be obeyed, adored and pleased. At the acme of spiritual progress his consciousness merges and becomes indistinguishable from the Supreme Spirit. Now the classical Dvaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita systems do not at all look upon God as an extra-cosmic being to be feared. The indwelling nature of God and the individual's consciousness losing the *awareness* of its separateness in the *absorption* of the highest form of spiritual communion, will not be denied by these traditional systems. The divergences come when experience is translated into the intellectual concepts accepted by their Sampradāyas (traditions) and are clothed as theo-philosophies.

Rāmānuja's system recognises that in liberation, though the Jīva retains his individuality, his Dharma-bhūta-jñāna becomes one with that of God, as the light of wick lamp becomes one with that of a blazing flame while the tiny individuality of it continues to exist. For the Mādhvas also, for whom the Jīva is a reflection of God, his Original, without a reflecting medium, the Jīva's awareness can get

absolutely absorbed in the enjoyment of Divine Bliss, a modicum of which he shares with the Divine. The chasm between the Jīva and Īśvara does not seem to be so absolute in experience as it is made out in theory.

This is the meaning of the age-old Vedic statement, '*Ekam Sat Viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti* — The Real Being is one; the learned persons speak of him differently,' It is this supreme truth that Śrī Kṛṣṇa confirms in the Gītā passage, '*Mama vartmānu-vartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ* — It is My path that man traverses from all directions.' It is the same doctrine that Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa re-asserted in the modern age when he said, '*Yatho-math tatho path* - as many traditions, so many paths.'

If Vedānta is to receive world acceptance, the followers of it should abandon the polemical method of the various traditions (Sampradāyas) of it, and interpret it from the stand-point of experience, in which all the differences and conflicting stances of its traditions as theo-philosophies resolve into the identical goal of an inexhaustable and many-faceted Personal-Impersonal Absolute Being, to put limits to whom by claiming Him to be only 'this' and not 'that' will be a blasphemy.*

* For the scientific basis of such a doctrine please refer to Appendix-1



Śrī Rāmānuja: Life

Nativity and Divine Affiliations

According to the generally accepted tradition, Śrī Rāmānuja lived a very long life of 120 years from A.D. 1017 to 1137. Carman, who has made a detailed study of Rāmānuja in his book *The Theology of Rāmānuja*, however, suggests on the basis of certain features of the traditional biographies and references therein to contemporary history, that the span of his life might have been only 80 years, from 1077 to 1157. He was born as the son of a learned Vedic Brahmana named Āsuri Keśava Dīkṣita and his wife Kāntimatī. Keśava Dīkṣita was given by Vedic scholars the title of Sarvakratu, meaning the performer of all Vedic Yajñas, by way of recognition of his expertise in Vedic rituals. He lived in the village of Śrīperumbudur situated about 30 miles to the south-west of the modern city of Madras. There existed in that village even then the temple of Ādi Keśava Perumāḷ. On one side of the temple courtyard one can see today a shrine, within which is seated with folded hands, as the first servant of the Lord, the image of Yatirāja, the prince among ascetics, as Rāmānuja came to be known in later days.

As Keśava Dīkṣita had no issue even after several years of marriage, he thought of seeking Divine aid through performance of a Vedic sacrifice in adoration of the Supreme Being at a very holy spot. For this purpose he went with his wife to the sacred shrine of Pārthasārathi at the place called Thiru-alli-keṇi (lily-lake), known today as Triplicane. In the course of his austere practices, he got in dream the commandment of the Lord: 'O Sarvakratu, I am much pleased with your observance of Dharma and steadfast devotion. Be

not anxious. I Myself shall be born as your son. Prompted by evil motives and unable to know the true purport of the teachings of the scriptures, men are considering themselves to be the Godhead, and out of pride they are becoming wicked and perverse. So unless I incarnate Myself as an Ācārya, they are doomed. Go back home with your wife. Your desire will be fulfilled.'

According to this Divine promise, a child was born to the couple. As he had the divine marks of Viṣṇu, he was named Rāmānuja, which means Lakṣmaṇa, the brother of Rāma. Lakṣmaṇa, who was a part of Viṣṇu, was Ādiśeṣa in his divine status as the first of the Lord's servants (śeṣas). He was born as Lakṣmaṇa to attend on Rāma. The divine affiliation of the new-born child was supposed to be with him.

Life at Śrīperumbudur

From his early childhood Rāmānuja showed signs of his prodigious intellect. By hearing lessons even once from his teacher, he could master them. As he grew up, his devotional potentialities too expressed themselves in the form of the great attraction he felt for devotees. At that time a great devotee named Kāñcīpūrṇa used to go every day to Kāñcīpuram from his house at Poonamallee, a neighbouring village, for the worship of the Deity Varadarāja at Kāñcī. His way was through Śrīperumbudur by the side of Rāmānuja's house. Rāmānuja fraternized with him and one evening invited him to take food at his house. Being a man of a low caste, Kāñcīpūrṇa felt much hesitation, but finally acceded. Rāmānuja fed him sumptuously and, when he was resting, wanted to shampoo his feet. Kāñcīpūrṇa would not allow such a high born Vedic Brāhmaṇa like Rāmānuja to do this form of personal service. Rāmānuja's reply to this protest was: 'Pray, is it the wearing of a sacred thread that makes one a Brāhmaṇa? He who is devoted to God alone is a Brāhmaṇa.' This shows that from his early life Rāmānuja had in him the germs of that spiritual liberalism which could overcome all barriers of caste.

Discipleship under Yādavaprakāśa

When Rāmānuja was sixteen, Keśava Dīkṣita got him married. But about a month after, Keśava died, leaving the whole family plunged in grief. To be weaned away from the memory of this unfortunate event as also for facilitating the higher education of Rāmānuja, the family moved to the neighbouring well-known town of Kāñcīpuram. He had already passed through the study of Sanskrit and the Vedas under his learned father, and now wanted to study advanced philosophy, especially Vedānta. At Kāñcī there was a celebrated philosopher named Yādavaprakāśa, who was considered an authority on Advaita Vedānta* which was the current philosophy in those regions then. Yādavaprakāśa was very much gratified to get such a talented person as disciple. Rāmānuja observed all the disciplines expected of disciples, viz., attentive study of the teachings given and doing personal services to the teacher. Yādavaprakāśa too loved the disciple very much, and gave him the first place among those who studied under him.

Differences with Yādava

But as time went on, differences in view between the disciple and the teacher began to emerge. Devotion to a Personal God was ingrained in Rāmānuja. But Yādava did not accept such a Being. The non-dualism denoted today as Yādavīya Siddhānta is only a brand of Bhedābheda, very much different from Śrī Śaṅkara's Advaita. According to Yādava this changeful and ever-perishing universe is the cosmic form of Brahman. This form as cosmos is real and not a mere appearance. At the back of it, beyond time, space and causation, is His Supreme Reality which is Existence Consciousness Bliss Absolute (sat-cit-ānanda and

* Yādavaprakāśa's philosophical affiliation is rather controversial. No works of his are left, but his views are expounded in Rāmānuja's Bhāṣya on the Vedānta Sūtras as Pūrvapakṣa [opposite view] and refuted by him. That philosophy is a brand of Bhedābheda. Probably in those days, Advaita and Bhedābheda were not clearly differentiated.

ananta). This is what is to be accepted and realized. In Rāmānuja's mature years this system is very bitterly criticized by him as worse than Māyāvāda. He compares such a Brahman to a man who is pampered and decorated on one side, while his other side is being scorched or hammered. But these philosophical differences were not very clear at that time, and Yādava was considered an authority on Advaita.

This difference in outlook gradually began to manifest openly in spite of Rāmānuja's strenuous effort to restrain himself. One day while Yādava was being massaged with oil by Rāmānuja, the former gave an interpretation of a passage from Chāndogya Upaniṣad starting with: Kapyāsam puṇḍarīkam... 'etc. Yādava, strictly following Śankara's interpretation of the passage, explained it as meaning, 'lotus-like eyes resembling in colour the nates of a monkey'. Such a comparison of the eyes of the Lord with a despicable part of an animal was much more than what Rāmānuja could tolerate, and hot tears flowing from his eyes began to fall on Yādava's body. Yādava thereupon asked him the cause of his grief. On Rāmānuja expressing his bitter grief at the damaging description of the Lord's eyes, Yādava felt considerably annoyed and asked him to give a better explanation, if he had any. Rāmānuja faced the challenge successfully. He interpreted kapyāsam as kam (water) pibati (drinks), he who drinks water [i.e., the sun (sūryaḥ)] and as blossoming. Interpreted in this way, the words mean 'resembling a lotus blossomed by the sun'. Yādava pretended to admire Rāmānuja's skill in interpretation with the caveat that his was an indirect interpretation. Another day, Yādava interpreted the Upaniṣadic passage: satyam jñānam anantam brahma, as meaning, 'Brahman is Truth, is Knowledge, and is Infinity.' Rāmānuja objected to it and said that the passage means that 'Brahman is endowed with the qualities of truth, knowledge and infinitude.' These qualities are His, but not He, just as 'my body is mine and not I am the body.'

Such differences with deep philosophical implications gradually convinced Yādava that Rāmānuja would become a full-blown dualist in course of time and a deadly opponent of Advaita. Allowed to flourish, he would found a rival school. So he came to the conclusion that the best way to avoid such dangers was to do away with Rāmānuja. He took his other disciples into his special confidence and formed a conspiracy. It was decided to go on a pilgrimage to the holy Ganges for a bath. Rāmānuja also was to be persuaded to be in the party. At a convenient place on the way they should murder him. The sin of this they could wash off by bath in the holy Ganges.

Rescue of Rāmānuja from the plot

With this devilish purpose the party started. After some days' travel they reached Gaṇḍāranya at the foot of the Vindhya. The plan was to murder Rāmānuja somewhere there. But Rāmānuja got previous information of this at the nick of time through Govinda, a close relative and co-disciple included in the party, and was able to make his escape. He travelled fast through the deep forest until, towards evening, he was forced to sit down under a tree out of exhaustion. Soon a hunter couple came near him and fraternized with him, saying that they were going south to Rāmeśvaram on pilgrimage. They took him to a convenient place for rest at night and promised to take him at dawn to a nearby well for washing and drinking water.

Next morning they did accordingly. Rāmānuja went down the well by its well-laid steps and himself drank its sweet and cool water and brought up some quantities of it for the hunter couple. But to his utter surprise they had disappeared, and in place of the forest, Rāmānuja found round about temple towers and a cluster of houses. Not knowing where he was, he asked a passer-by about the identity of the place and was surprised beyond measure

to be told that it was Kāñcīpuram, the city of his residence. Rāmānuja now felt as if he was awakened from a sleep and recognized that the place was really Kāñcīpuram so familiar to him. He then went to his relatives, but did not reveal anything about the trap that had been laid for him by his teacher. On the other hand, when Yādavaprakāśa and party returned after some months, he joined again his Gurukula, and carried on his studies and the service of his teacher assiduously.

Yādavaprakāśa was at first frightened on seeing Rāmānuja, as he was under the idea that he must have died after his disappearance. But seeing Rāmānuja's humility, he took it for granted that the former knew nothing about his evil designs. He behaved very lovingly to Rāmānuja and began instructing him in Vedānta. But differences of interpretation soon arose again between these two, whose ingrained philosophic outlooks were incompatible. One day Yādavaprakāśa was interpreting the Upaniṣadic passage — sarvam khalvidam brahma, ne'ha nānāsti kiñcana, 'All this is Brahman; there is no diversity here whatever.' He was interpreting it, justifying the doctrine of the oneness of the Atman and Brahman. Rāmānuja differed from him and said the passage would have meant the oneness of all with Brahman, if it were not followed by — tajjalān iti śānta upāsīta, 'This universe is born in, sustained by, and dissolves in Brahman; meditate thus on Him.' This qualification makes the earlier part mean: 'The things in this Saṁsāra are not existing severally, but as pearls strung on a thread; they are interpenetrated by Brahman and held as a unity without impairing their manifoldness.' This interpretation of Rāmānuja generated a violent fit of annoyance in Yādavaprakāśa. He asked Rāmānuja to get away from his Gurukula. In obedience to the teacher, he took leave of him after worshipping his feet in all reverence.

Rāmānuja's drift to Vaiṣṇavism

This marks the watershed in the life of Rāmānuja. The Vaiṣṇava tradition attributes this break of Rāmānuja from

Yādavaprakāśa to the prayer of the great saintly scholar Yāmunācārya (Ālavandār), who was the leader of the Vaiṣṇava community at Śrīraṅgam at this time. Hearing from devotees that Rāmānuja could become a worthy successor to him, he came to Kāñcīpuram to meet him, but seeing him in the company of the hostile Yādavaprakāśa, Yāmunā had only a look at him from a distance. Then he prayed to Lord Varadarāja, the Deity of the Viṣṇu temple at Kāñcī, to turn Rāmānuja's mind in the right direction and secure him for the leadership of the Vaiṣṇavas. It was as a result of the Lord's prompting in response to the great devotee's prayer that Rāmānuja broke away from Yādavaprakāśa and began to seek the company of Vaiṣṇava devotees and service in Varadarāja's temple.

Kāñcīpūrṇa, the great devotee who went every day from Poonamallee to Kāñcī for the service of the Lord Varadarāja, was already like a respected teacher to Rāmānuja from his early days in his native village. Rāmānuja now approached him and fell down at his feet in prostration in spite of Kāñcīpūrṇa's protest; for he was a Śūdra, a man of a low caste, while the other was a high-born Brāhmaṇa, and master of Sanskrit and philosophy. But Rāmānuja justified his act on the ground that Kāñcīpūrṇa's mature devotion to the Lord was far superior to high birth and learning, which generally went only to augment one's pride and egotism. Thereupon Kāñcīpūrṇa instructed him to carry every day a vesselful of water from a neighbouring holy well for the service of Varadarāja who, he assured him, would fulfil his devotional aspirations. Rāmānuja therefore took up this service and also pursued the study of Vaiṣṇava texts in Tamil.

His acceptance of Yāmunā's leadership

Sometime after this break-away of Rāmānuja from Yādava, the news about it reached Yāmuna through some devotees from Kāñcī, who had gone to Śrīraṅgam to see

Yāmuna who had just recovered from a serious illness which brought him to the brink of death. The news overjoyed Yāmuna, for he was everyday praying to Śrī Rāṅganātha that Rāmānuja might be brought to Śrīraṅgam to lead the Vaiṣṇava community. With this prayer he had one day also offered to the Deity his great hymn of praise called Stotraratnam. He was himself aware that his last days were not far off and the Vaiṣṇava community that he had fostered would then be leaderless. So on hearing of Rāmānuja's shift of allegiance, he sent a senior disciple of his by name Mahāpūrṇa to persuade Rāmānuja to come to Śrīraṅgam. After four days' walk, Mahāpūrṇa reached Kāñcī and first conferred with the devotee Kāñcīpūrṇa about the mission on which he had come and then went to Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja, on hearing that Yāmuna's health was sinking and that he wanted to see him [Rāmānuja], hurried to finish his duty in Varadarāja's temple and follow Mahāpūrṇa to Śrīraṅgam.

After four days of travel they reached Tirucirapalli in the neighbourhood of Śrīraṅgam. They saw there a long funeral procession. They were informed that Yāmuna had again taken seriously ill and died, and his body was being taken for cremation. In utter sorrow and disappointment Rāmānuja swooned. After recovery, he went to see the dead body of that greatest among Vaiṣṇavas. As he gazed on the body he found that three fingers of the dead saint's right hand were folded and clenched; this, he thought, was meaningful. He asked the devotees, who were crowding round, whether the dead saint's fingers were clenched like that while living too. He got a negative reply. Therefore Rāmānuja guessed by intuition that the clenched fingers represented his three aspirations and his message to himself [Rāmānuja]. He then gave out one after another the following declarations:

1. Remaining always in the Vaiṣṇava fold, I shall arrange for a commentary on Nammālvār's Tiruvaimozhi and then preach the doctrine of self-surrender;

2. I shall write a commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa, taking the earlier commentaries also into consideration and revealing the saving knowledge to people;

3. In honour and memory of the great Parāśara who produced the Viṣṇupurāṇa, I shall leave behind a great Vaiṣṇava by that name.

As he gave out these three declarations, the fingers of the dead saint relaxed and got straightened one by one.

Rāmānuja adopts Sannyāsāśrama

After the funeral was over Rāmānuja immediately returned to Kāñcī with a serious mood reflecting on his face. Reaching Kāñcī, he spent all his time in the service of Varadarāja and in the company of the devotee Kāñcīpūrṇa, bestowing very little attention to his family affairs, which caused much distress to his wife Rakṣāmbā. She could not also stand his tendency to break caste rules in showing devotion to holy men. Rāmānuja wanted to accept Kāñcīpūrṇa as his spiritual teacher, but the latter in all humility did not accede to his request. Rāmānuja prayed to him to get a message on this matter from Lord Varadarāja. Next day Kāñcīpūrṇa communicated to him that the Lord had asked him to tell Rāmānuja that he was to be initiated by Mahātmā Mahāpūrṇa. In high glee, Rāmānuja immediately started for Śrīraṅgam to meet that great soul. By this time, by a divinely ordained coincidence, Mahāpūrṇa had already started for Kāñcī to persuade Rāmānuja to go over to holy Śrīraṅgam. It was one year since Yāmuna had passed away, and his disciples and devotees could find no other way to fill up that void than by inviting Rāmānuja to take up that position. So they deputed Mahāpūrṇa on this mission. After travelling for four days he met Rāmānuja near the temple of Viṣṇu at Madhurāntakam. Both were overcome with joy and thankfulness to the Lord. At Rāmānuja's pressing request Mahāpūrṇa admitted Rāmānuja officially into the Vaiṣṇava fold by impressing the seal with

Viṣṇu's conch and discus on both his arms, and imparting the Vaiṣṇava Mantra to him. Then both of them together went back to Kāñcīpuram. For six months they stayed at Kāñcīpuram, during which time Rāmānuja learnt from Mahāpūrṇa the supremely sacred four thousand Tamil verses known as Divya Prabandham.

But they had to part abruptly under a strange circumstance. Rāmānuja's wife Rakṣāmbāl, whose mentality was caste-ridden to the core, insulted Mahāpūrṇa's wife in strong language for spilling some drops of water from her water pot into Rakṣāmbāl's. Not only that, she cursed even Rāmānuja saying, 'Having fallen into the hands of this husband of mine, I have lost my caste and all.' This incident, when it reached Mahāpūrṇa's ears, led to his immediate departure to Śrīraṅgam without even informing Rāmānuja. Completely upset by the insult and humiliation of his Guru's wife by Rakṣāmbāl, Rāmānuja resolved to live no longer as a householder with her. Adopting a strategem, he informed Rakṣāmbāl that her father required her services at the impending marriage of her younger sister, and the lady went away to her father's home in all glee. Rāmānuja took this opportunity to perform the rites for entering the holy order of Sannyāsins, with Lord Varadarāja as his Guru. Through Kāñcīpūrṇa the Lord gave him the name Yatirāja.

After this event, Rāmānuja lived in Kāñcīpuram for sometime as the head of a monastery. Many disciples gathered round him and Rāmānuja began to give them a series of talks on Vedānta and Vaiṣṇavism. Among them was one young man with vast scriptural learning called Kureśa, who was to play an important part in Rāmānuja's life later. But the most remarkable conversion was that of Yādavaprakāśa himself. Repentant of his past evil conduct, Yādava was spending his days in the utter restlessness that a guilty conscience can generate. In this mood of mind he happened to meet Kāñcīpūrṇa, who took that opportunity to speak to him about the divinity of Rāmānuja and to

advise him to take refuge at his feet, by which alone he would regain peace of mind. So Yādava went to his erstwhile disciple and in turn accepted discipleship under him. He was given the new name Govinda Jeer.

Departure to Śrīraṅgam

When the news of Rāmānuja's adoption of Sannyāsa reached the ears of the Vaiṣṇava devotees at Śrīraṅgam, they were overjoyed, for they felt that the opportune time to get him to Śrīraṅgam had come. Commanded by Śrī Raṅganātha Himself, they now sent Mahāpūrṇa again on this mission. At Kāñcī, Mahāpūrṇa earnestly prayed to Lord Varadarāja to release Rāmānuja from His service. The Lord, granting his prayer, prompted Rāmānuja from within to accompany him to Śrīraṅgam. Reaching Śrīraṅgam, he studied many Vaiṣṇava texts under Mahāpūrṇa. In order to complete Rāmānuja's conversion to Vaiṣṇavism, Mahāpūrṇa advised him to go to Goṣṭipūrṇa, the most pre-eminent of the Vaiṣṇavas of those times, to be initiated into the Vaiṣṇava Mantra with its full import. Rāmānuja did so, but that teacher asked him to come on another day. In this way, perhaps as a test of his earnestness, he put off Rāmānuja eighteen times. At last, commanded by the Lord, he imparted the Mantra to Rāmānuja with the special instruction that he should never impart it to others. The Mantra was so potent that whoever heard it would attain to heaven.

Strangely enough, the first act of Rāmānuja on leaving the Āśrama of his Guru was to get upon the Gopuram [gate-tower] of a wayside temple, call together all the neighbouring people, and in his stentorian voice, declare to them the sacred Mantra for repetition with him. News of this transgression of his order soon reached Goṣṭipūrṇa. When Rāmānuja next went to salute him, Goṣṭipūrṇa denounced him with fire flaming from his eyes in indignation at this gross and wilful transgression of his commandment.

Clasping his Guru's feet in utter humility, Rāmānuja submitted that it would be a blessing if such vast numbers of people were to be saved through his being consigned to hell thereby. This large-heartedness of Rāmānuja touched the heart of Goṣṭipūrṇa to the core, and he immediately prostrated himself before Rāmānuja and declared that thereafter Rāmānuja was his Guru and not the reverse.

After this full initiation into the esoterism of the Vaiṣṇava cult, Rāmānuja had a quick but thorough training in all the aspects of Vaiṣṇavism, under the five disciples of the late Yāmuna. These five — Kāñcīpūrṇa, Mahāpūrṇa, Goṣṭipūrṇa, Mālādhara and Vararaṅga — were like five parts of the late Yāmuna-muni, and now through the disciplining under these five, Rāmānuja became Yāmuna himself, as it were. He was now fit to be the leader of Vaiṣṇavas. One day, Lord Raṅganātha Himself is said to have addressed him thus: 'We have endowed you with the wealth of both our Realms, Ubhaya-vibhūti, i.e. of both this world and the eternal world. After examining everything, manage all the works of our house.' Rāmānuja thereupon took charge of the great temple of Raṅganātha, inspected everything including the treasury, dismissed some of the office bearers and appointed new ones, and thus made a thorough reorganisation of the management of the temple. His reforms did not however go unresisted. The head priest (arcaka) of the temple resented these reforms which curtailed his authority and source of income. He therefore tried to get rid of Rāmānuja by poisoning him. The plot failed, thanks to divine intervention, and Rāmānuja was now fully astride the administrative machinery of the temple. People in general, and the temple functionaries in particular, highly appreciated the reorganisation

Significance of migration to Śrīraṅgam

The migration of Rāmānuja to Śrīraṅgam is a landmark in his life. The commingling of Rāmānuja's Vedic

scholarship with the Vaiṣṇavism of the Ālvārs is what it signifies. Southern Vaiṣṇavism, known as Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism, had its origin in the life and hymns on the Lord, especially as Kṛṣṇa, composed by a succession of twelve Bhaktas, mad with the love of God, known as the Ālvārs, meaning those who have dived into the depths of divine love. They appeared, according to modern scholarship, from the 2nd to the 8th century A.D., but ancient tradition ascribed to them a period from 430 B.C. downwards. Their lives and compositions comprehend all forms of personalized love for God, represented in much later times in Caitanya's sect — attitudes known as Dāśya (servitude), Āpatya (sonship), Sakhya (comradeship), Vātsalya (affection for a child), and Madhura (conjugal). It is noteworthy that some of these Ālvārs were also great men of action. It was one of them, Tirumaṅgai Ālvār, who renovated and brought into its modern proportion the great temple of Raṅganātha at Śrīraṅgam. It is perhaps in recognition of this contribution of Ālvārs to the practice of divine love that the Bhāgavata Māhātmya speaks of the Drāviḍa country as the birthplace of Bhakti, and the text of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa says that great devotees of Nārāyaṇa will be born in the country watered and sanctified by Tāmraparṇī, Payasvinī, and the west flowing Mahānadī.

In later days, the small section of people who drew inspiration from the devotional songs of Ālvārs was consolidated into a group by a scholarly devotee named Nāthamuni. He was well-versed in Sanskrit texts, in the Yogaśāstra, and in the Vaiṣṇava traditions of the Ālvārs. He collected and edited all these devotional hymns of the Ālvārs into a text of four thousand verses which came to be recognised as the Tamil Veda. He also arranged for their recital in the great temple at Śrīraṅgam and other places.

The organization of the Vaiṣṇava community was put on a secure footing by Nāthamuni's grandson Yāmunācārya, who was an accomplished scholar in Vedic studies and in

Tamil Vaiṣṇava tradition. Adopted into a royal family, he lived a luxurious life in early days, but soon a conversion came over him and he took to an ascetic life and lived in a small monastery. He succeeded considerably in consolidating the Vaiṣṇava community with Śrīraṅgam temple as their headquarters. It was his great ambition to bring about a union between the emotional religion of the Ālvārs and the Vedāntic methodology of philosophic exposition which had become current in the scholarly world after the advent of Śaṅkarācārya and his commentaries on Vedāntic texts. He could not himself fulfil this work in his life, but towards the end of his life he came across Rāmānuja and recognized in him the competent Vedic scholar who could do it. The story of how Rāmānuja was gradually weaned away from the tutelage of Yādavaprakāśa and brought into the Vaiṣṇava fold, how he was eventually brought to Śrīraṅgam, and how he was prepared for his life's mission by a thorough instruction in the Tamil Veda by the great disciples of Yāmuna, has already been narrated.

Life at Śrīraṅgam

To resume the thread of Rāmānuja's life from where it was left, Rāmānuja spent at Śrīraṅgam the major part of the rest of his long life-span, except for two intervals, to which reference will be made later. He spent his time in discoursing on Nammālvārs' Tamil Prabandha of thousand verses to the devotees and disciples who thronged to hear him. It was in one of those discourses that he revealed the Ālvār's stress on the glory and sanctity of Śrī Śaila [Tirupati] which is equated with Vaikuṇṭha in Nammālvār's hymn, and induced one of his disciples, Anantācārya, to go and develop that holy place. Several disciples, lay and monastic, now gathered round him. One of those was Yajñamūrti, a celebrated Advaita scholar, who had travelled all over North India challenging and defeating scholars in debates. Now hearing about Rāmānuja, who had become the leader of an opposite school, he came to Śrīraṅgam

to enter into a Vedāntic polemic with him. For seventeen days discussion continued on the topics of Māyāvāda versus Rāmānuja's Vaiṣṇava interpretation of Vedānta. In the end Yajñamūrti admitted defeat and became a Vaiṣṇava and a disciple of Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja commissioned him to spend his time in writing texts on devotional philosophy beneficial to mankind. Days passed in this way, with Rāmānuja winning hostile thinkers to his fold and exhorting Vaiṣṇavas to live a life of intense devotion and renunciation. His monastery at Śrīraṅgam came to be inhabited by seventy-four disciples, all of them learned, all-renouncing and devout.

The writing of Śrībhāṣya

Rāmānuja now felt that he had to a large extent fulfilled his first promise to Yāmuna that he would popularize the Tamil Veda and convert large numbers to Vaiṣṇavism. He had yet to fulfil the second — that of producing a commentary on Bādarāyaṇa's Vedānta-sūtras according to the devotional philosophy of his school. He now addressed himself to this difficult task. For this purpose he felt it necessary to get Bodhāyana's Vṛtti on this Text, as it was an authority on the philosophical tradition which devotional Vaiṣṇavism represented. He could, however, find no copy of it anywhere in the South. He came to know that it was available at Śāradāpīṭha in Kāśmīr, and so started on the long journey to that place along with his disciple Kureśa. He reached the place after a journey of three months. The great Paṇḍits of Śāradāpīṭha received him cordially and were much impressed by his great personality and learning. But when he asked for permission to look into the Bodhāyana Vṛtti in their library, they gave the evasive reply that the book had been worm-eaten and thus lost. For, they felt that if this dualistic scholar studied that text, he would do havoc to Advaita philosophy. Much disconsolate on being so informed, Rāmānuja was lying dejected when Goddess Śāradā, the presiding Deity Herself, appeared before him,

and handing over the Vṛtti to him, asked him to go away immediately. On the Paṇḍits' discovering the loss of the book, some strong ones among them went in hot pursuit of the Ācārya, and after four days of walking, overtook him and wrested the book from him. Rāmānuja was however consoled when Kureśa informed him that during nights he was studying the book and that he thus knew the whole of it by heart. On reaching Śrīraṅgam, Rāmānuja set himself to write the commentary now famous under the name Śrībhāṣya. Kureśa was his amanuensis and the invigilator to check whether what was dictated was faithful to Bodhāyana's ideas.

All-India Pilgrimage

After completing the Śrībhāṣya, accompanied by a large number of his disciples, Rāmānuja went on an all-India pilgrimage, which was also of the nature of a Digvijaya, confronting philosophers of other schools of thought and spreading Vaiṣṇavism among them. He first visited all the holy centres of Tamil land and of Kerala and gradually moved northward — visiting Dvārakā, Mathurā, Vṛndāvana, Śālagrāma, Sāketa, Badarikāśrama, Naimiṣa, Puṣkara and at last the Śāradāpīṭha in Kāśmīr. The Paṇḍits of Śāradāpīṭha had acrimonious debates with him, but he was able to convert the ruler of Kāśmīr to his faith. Here Rāmānuja had a vision of Hayagrīva, one of the Divine Incarnations. Then he went to Kāśī, where he stayed for sometime and won over many learned men to his faith. He then travelled southward to Śrīpuruṣottama-Kṣetra, now known as Puri. He founded there a monastery called Embār Math. The scholars of that place, who controlled the temple, refused to face him in debate for fear of defeat. He next went to Ahobila, situated on Garuḍa mountain, where he established a monastery. Next he worshipped Nṛsimha-mūrti at Īśalinga, and afterwards reached the temple of Venkaṭācalapati at Tirupati. There he settled through his superhuman powers a dispute on the question whether the

image of the temple was of Śiva or Viṣṇu, in favour of Vaiṣṇavas. He then returned to Śrīraṅgam via his old residence of Kāñcīpuram where he did obeisance to Vāradarāja.

In the course of this 'victory tour', Rāmānuja however had to face defeats by divine intervention on two occasions. One of his objects in this tour was to win over as many great temples as possible into the Śrīvaiṣṇava influence. In Tirupati he succeeded, but he failed in his effort in this direction at two places — at the great temple of Ananta-padmanābha at Trivandrum and of Jagannātha at Puri. It is said that in both these places, at the earnest prayer of devotees, the Lord threw away Rāmānuja to a distance of several miles while he was asleep. In both these temples the emblems and rituals followed were those of the Vaikhānasa Āgamas (ritualistic code), and Rāmānuja's idea was to change these into the Pañcarātra code, which the Śrīvaiṣṇavas followed.

Sometime after his return, he was able to fulfil his third promise to Yāmuna, namely, naming a worthy person after Parāśara and Vyāsa in gratitude for having produced Viṣṇupurāṇa. He could do this when a pair of twins was born to his disciple Kureśa. Kureśa was previously a very wealthy person owning vast landed property near Kāñcīpuram. He was also very pious and extremely charitable in disposition. His gates were open from morning till night to give hospitality to all who needed it. His wife Āṇḍāl too was of the same disposition. They attached themselves to Rāmānuja and followed him wherever he went. After Rāmānuja's migration to Śrīraṅgam, Kureśa lost all interest in worldly life. He abandoned all his wealth and, accompanied by his wife, went to Śrīraṅgam to serve Rāmānuja. There he took food by holy begging like an ascetic. One rainy day he could not go out and the couple were starving. Then Āṇḍāl prayed to Raṅganātha for relief, and soon a handsome boy arrived at their house with nice

food offerings of Rāṅganātha. As a result of partaking of it, it is said, Āṇḍāl became pregnant and gave birth to a pair of handsome twins, whom Rāmānuja named six months after as Parāśara and Vyāsa. He thus fulfilled his third promise to Yāmuna. Parāśara grew into a great saintly scholar, and succeeded Rāmānuja in later days as the leader of the Vaiṣṇavas.

Migration to Melkote

The even tenor of Rāmānuja's life at Śrīraṅgam was now disturbed by the policy of rigorous persecution adopted by the Cola king, Kulottuṅga (also called Kṛmikaṇṭha or 'the worm-throated' by the Vaiṣṇavas). He was a fanatical Śaivite and wanted that Śaivism should become the sole religion of his State. The most important step in this direction was, according to him and his advisers, to make the leader of Vaiṣṇavism sign a declaration that Śiva was the only Deity worthy of worship. Accordingly Rāmānuja was summoned to go to the capital for this purpose. To shield him from danger, his very dear and devoted disciple Kureśa impersonated himself as Rāmānuja and went to the Cola capital with another disciple Periya Nambi. The trick was found out, and both were punished by the gouging out of their eyes. Periya Nambi died on the spot while Kureśa went into retirement to a great Vaiṣṇava temple Tirumālirunsolai near Madurai. As for Rāmānuja himself, he escaped through the hilly regions of the Western Ghats to the modern Mysore territory, which was then ruled by King Bitrideva of the Hoysāla dynasty. He was a Jain by faith. In an assembly of Jain scholars summoned by that king, Rāmānuja defeated them in polemics. As a consequence he was able to convert King Bitrideva into Vaiṣṇavism and rename him as Viṣṇuvardhana. A large number of Jains were also converted. With that king's active patronage Rāmānuja founded a great temple at Yadavādri, now known as Melkote, and five others in other places. Quite a number of his eminent disciples too had trekked

into Mysore territory and colonies of Śrīvaiṣṇavas came to be established round these temples. Rāmānuja loved this place specially, because of the abundant availability there of the white earth with which Śrīvaiṣṇavas put the divine mark on the forehead.

There is an interesting tradition about the image at Melkote temple, which is known as Yādavādrīpati. Rāmānuja got it by digging up an ant-hill. The villagers informed him of a prevailing tradition of an ancient local temple, which was destroyed by some Muslim invaders, and of the temple image known as Yādavādrīpati being buried by the priests somewhere there for its safety. Rāmānuja, who had on the previous night a dream about the very same Deity, made arrangements to install the image, and gradually a big temple came into existence there. The Deity was not satisfied with this. He had no Utsava-vigraha — a counterpart for being taken in procession outside the temple. The Deity informed Rāmānuja that the image known as Sampatkumāra was then with the daughter of a Muslim ruler at Delhi, and commanded him to get that image. It is said that Rāmānuja and a disciple went up to Delhi and ingratiating themselves with the Muslim king by their learning and holy demeanour, got that image and hurried to the South. On missing Sampatkumāra, the Sultān's daughter Bibi Lachimar, who looked upon that Deity as a lover, followed him to the South and reached Śrīraṅgam. Rāmānuja recognized in her a great devotee, and therefore she was allowed to enter the temple, though she was born in a Muslim family. Thenceforth she spent her time in the service of the Lord, and ultimately her pure frame is said to have dissolved in the body of Śrī Sampatkumāra. An image of her is still worshipped in many temples in the south in recognition of her unparalleled devotion.

After Kulottuṅga's death, when a more tolerant and liberal-minded ruler succeeded to the Cola throne, Rāmānuja returned to Śrīraṅgam. Sorrow-stricken at the

prospect of separation from him, his devotees at Melkote implored him to instil his presence into an image of him that they had made and installed there. Leaving Yādavagiri, Rāmānuja returned to his own monastery at Śrīraṅgam, visiting many holy temples on the way. Two noteworthy places among them are Śrīvilliputtur, the birthplace of the great woman devotee Āṇḍāl, who is included among the Ālvārs, and Ālvar-tirunagarī, the birthplace of Nammālvār, the first and greatest among the Ālvārs.

Last Days

Rāmānuja lived for sixty more years, which he spent peacefully at Śrīraṅgam, teaching his disciples and devotees and producing some of his later works dealing with pure Vaiṣṇava pattern of devotion. One day, in the course of giving a discourse, he became suddenly still and unaware of the surroundings, and two drops of blood trickled down the corners of his eyes. On his recovering his normal mood, he was asked by his devotees the reason for this trance-like state. He replied: 'Today the people of Śrīperumbudur have made me a captive of their love. After infusing life into the stone image, they have now finished the rite of opening the eyes of the image.'

The fact was that the devotees of his birthplace had constructed in their temple campus, another temple and then installed his image. This temple and image can still be seen there. In Melkote also there is one, to which reference has already been made. These events are symbolic of the fact that all over the south he had established the glory of Vaiṣṇavism before his exit at the age of hundred and twenty. He had installed Parāśara, the son of Kureśa, as his successor to the leadership of the Vaiṣṇava community. He now became completely absorbed into himself to the utter consternation of his devotees. When they implored him to stay on amidst them, he replied, 'My dear children, why on earth are you thus confounded like ignorant ones? I

do reside in your hearts for ever. It is not possible for me even for a single moment to be without you.' After this, to oblige his devotees, he lived for three more days.

In the meantime, being beseeched by his devotees that his divine body should be with them always, he ordered an image of him to be made in haste. He transmitted his own powers into that by breathing into the crown of its head. Then addressing his devotees he said: 'My children, this is my second self. There is no difference whatever between this and myself. Casting aside the worn-out body aside, I shall now reside in this new body.' Then keeping his head in the lap of his dear cousin Govinda and his feet on the feet of Āndhrapūrṇa, and looking at the two wooden sandals of his own Guru, he entered into the Eternal Realm of Viṣṇu. It took place in the noon on a Saturday, the tenth day of the bright half of the month of Māgha of the year 1137.

The Last Message of Śrī Rāmānuja

It is said that, shortly before Rāmānuja's demise, he asked all his disciples to gather round him and gave them a statement of his great teachings and an exhortation to follow them. The gist of those teachings is given below:

'Worship holy men exactly as you would do in the case of your spiritual preceptor. Have sincere faith in the teachings of the great Ācāryas of yore. Never be slaves to your senses. Be not satisfied with the acquisition of worldly knowledge. Go on reading repeatedly the books dealing with the greatness of God and the wonders of His creation. If perchance you are favoured with scintillating wisdom by the Guru's grace, then the attraction of the senses will cease for you. Learn to treat all your feelings with indifference. Enjoy the utterance of the names and glories of God's devotees with as much relish as the utterance of God's names and glories. Bear in mind that he who renders service to God's devotees attains God

speedily. Therefore, unless you dedicate yourself to the service of God and His devotees, you will not be saved, however wise you may be. Do not consider the life of a Vaiṣṇava as a means for acquiring any selfish advantage. You must endeavour to realize the ideal.

‘Devote a portion of the day, at least one hour, to the contemplation of the greatness of your spiritual preceptor and some time every day to the reading of the sacred writings of the Ālvārs or the Ācāryas. Always seek the company of those that pursue the path of self-surrender to God and avoid the company of those that say, “There are other paths leading to salvation.” Do not associate with people who are always in quest of filthy lucre and sense-enjoyment, but mingle with the devotees of God to the extent possible. Whoever looks upon the sacred images of God as mere stones, his own spiritual teacher as an ordinary human being, eminent devotees as high or low according to the caste of their birth, the holy water that has touched the feet of God and has as a consequence acquired the power to purify and purge one of all sins as ordinary water, the sacred Mantras as a collection of sounds, and the Supreme Lord of all the worlds as one not higher than the Devas — let him be considered as an unworthy person fit only for the purgatory.’

When Rāmānuja finished this discourse, the disciples requested him again to exhort them as to how they should live in the world till life departed from the body. Thereupon the Ācārya commanded them to abide by the following instructions:

‘He who has truly surrendered himself at the feet of God should not bestow any thought on his future, which is entirely at His disposal; for the least anxiety felt in that connection betrays the hypocrisy in his self-surrender. His present life is entirely determined by his past Karmas; so it is not proper to grieve over it. Let not the performance

of your duties be regarded as a means for achieving worldly ends, but consider it as service rendered to the Supreme Being.

‘Study the Śrībhāṣya and teach it to others — this is a service most pleasing to God. If this be not possible, study the holy writings of Saint Śaṭakṛpa and other great souls, and teach them to qualified disciples. Failing this, spend your lives in service to the Lord in the sacred places on earth. Else construct a hut at Yādavādri (Melkote) and live there in perfect peace. Or remain where you are, throwing all your burdens on God and remain immersed in the contemplation of the Dvaya Mantra. If none of the above is possible, seek a holy man who is full of wisdom, devotion and desirelessness, and move with him in such a way that he may be kind towards you. Uprooting all your egoism, abide by his words — this itself is a means for your salvation.

‘In this life on earth, find out by careful discrimination your friends, enemies and the indifferent. Holy men are your friends; those who hate God are your enemies; the worldly-minded are the indifferent ones. Let your heart rejoice at the sight of friends as though you have come across fine betel; flowers, and scents. At the sight of your enemies let your heart tremble as though you have faced a snake, a tiger, fire and so forth. At the sight of the indifferent, do not mind them any more than when coming across stocks and stones. Such should be the conduct of those who have taken refuge in God. Association with friends, the holy men, will confer spiritual illumination on you. Shun the company of enemies, and regarding the indifferent too, do not talk to them, and never show respect to them in consideration of the worldly benefits accruing to you thereby. For such benefits are sure to make you soon an enemy of God. Remembering that the All-merciful Being is ready to supply you all that you pray for, never beg of the enemies.’

Works of Rāmānuja

The most monumental work of Rāmānuja is Śrībhāṣya on the Vedānta-sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa, which is one of the basic texts of Vedānta. Besides this, he produced eight other works. These are (1) Vedānta-saṅgraha, an independent work expounding the philosophy of the Upaniṣads; (2) & (3) Vedānta-sāra and Vedānta-dīpa, which are brief commentaries on the Vedānta-sūtras; (4) Gītā-bhāṣya, a commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā; (5) Nitya-granthas, dealing with the daily rituals and devotional practices for his followers; (6), (7) & (8) Gadyatraya, three prose works which are of great cultic importance, though they may not be philosophical in tone. The first, Śaraṇāgatigadya, deals with greatness of self-surrender (prapatti) and the way of doing it. The second, Śrīraṅga-gadya, is a prayer to Lord Raṅganātha to accept one as his eternal servant. And the third, Vaikuṇṭha-gadya, is largely a description of Vaikuṇṭha, the Lord's Eternal Abode, about which a devotee must think often. There are some philosophical critics who do not accept the Gadya-trayas as the compositions of Śrī Rāmānuja, the author of the Śrībhāṣya. For, these texts deal with pure devotional themes like seeking shelter in the Lord and ecstatic descriptions of the divine abode. There is no trace of philosophy in them. But such critics forget that Rāmānuja was essentially a devotee and philosophy was only a means for him to bridge the gulf between the Vedic philosophical methodology and the emotional absorption of the Ālvārs. Besides, Rāmānuja lived a very long life of 120 years and it is natural that attitudes and interests of one in youth get mellowed and take an other-worldly complexion in advanced years.

Rāmānuja does not seem to have written anything in Tamil, though he discoursed in that language. These discourses of his on Nammālvār's devotional hymns (Tiruvāimozhi) form the subject matter of a highly Sanskritized work in Tamil known as the Six Thousand by

Kurukeśa or Pillān, one of the immediate successors of Rāmānuja. Thus was redeemed Rāmānuja's vow made before Yāmuna, to work for popularizing the teachings of Nammālvār.

Post-Rāmānuja Developments

Rāmānuja is supposed to have entrusted the spiritual care of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community to seventy-four Simhāsanapatis or apostles. Parāśara Bhatta, the son of Kureśa, was — according to Tenkalais, one section of Vaiṣṇavas — his successor as Ācārya. He produced only a Sanskrit commentary on Viṣṇu-sahasranāma and a manual of daily worship. According to another section, the Vadakalais, Rāmānuja appointed Kurukeśa or Pillān as his successor and entrusted him with the work of interpreting both the Sanskrit and Tamil literature of the sect. He wrote a Tamil commentary on the Tiruvāimozhi of Nammālvār in a highly Sanskritized Tamil style. It is believed that they are based on the Tamil discourses on the Hymns which Rāmānuja used to give. This was the beginning of a schism in the sect which became pronounced in about two hundred years after Rāmānuja, under the names of Vadakalai and Tenkalai. Rāmānuja's greatness consists not in being the founder of Śrīvaiṣṇavism or Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy, but in bringing to bear his Sanskritic and Veda-oriented ideology and methodology on the purely devotional heritage of the Ālvārs, and thus creating what is called Ubhaya-Vedānta, which is significant in the whole world of philosophy as also in the limited sphere of the Tamil land. The split is between these two elements, though both respect each other's texts in spite of doctrinal differences.

While there are several names of noted writers on the Tenkalai side, the most illustrious is that of Pillailoka Ācārya (1264-1327). He was at Śrīraṅgam when Malik Kafer, the general of Allāuddin Khilji, after sacking the Madurai temple, attacked the Śrīraṅgam temple, butchered

Vaiṣṇavas, looted the temple treasures and desecrated the images. Pillailoka Ācārya took a leading part in removing several images to places of safety. He was the author of eighteen manuals of Teṅkalai cult in highly Sanskritized Tamil. One of the most famous of his works is Śrī-vacana-bhūṣaṇam. With him Teṅkalaism became definitely formulated as a branch of Śrīvaiṣṇava faith. He was succeeded by Maṇavāla Mahāmuniḡal who is looked upon by Teṅkalais as their greatest Ācārya. The chief contribution of Teṅkalai teachers was the democratizing of the truth of the Darśanas (philosophies) which were before confined to the Sanskrit-knowing élite only.

On the Vadakalai side it is curious that its origin is traced to Pillān, who did not produce any Sanskrit work but only a compendium of the Tamil discourses of Rāmānuja in a heavily Sanskritized Tamil style, while in the Teṅkalai tradition Parāśara Bhatta, who wrote only in Sanskrit, is counted as the source of it. There were not many eminent Sanskrit writers in this tradition until the advent of Sudarśana Suri who produced the standard gloss on Rāmānuja's Śrībhāṣya.

This great scholar was one among those who were slaughtered at the time of Malik Kafer's sacking of Śrīraṅgam temple. But his writings were saved from destruction by another great Ācārya, perhaps the greatest after Rāmānuja, namely Vedānta Deśika, known also as Veṅkaṭanātha. He was born in Kāñcī in 1268 and lived for a full hundred years upto 1369. The impression he created on the mind of the contemporaries is signified by the recognition given to him as Ghaṇṭāvatāra — the incarnation of the bell of Śrīnivāsa at Tirupati, with the ringing of which He invites devotees to partake of His love. By the age of twenty he gained a knowledge of all the then known philosophies, arts and sciences, so that he came to be called Sarvatantra-svatantra and Kavi-tārkika-bhauma. He went on an all-India pilgrimage upto Badari lasting for

seven years. Though he was married, he lived a very austere life without accumulating any wealth. His spirit of renunciation is recorded in his small poem of five verses called 'Vairāgya-pañcaka'. It was a reply to his friend and compeer in learning, Mādhava Vidyāranya, when he invited him [Veṅkatanātha] to the royal court of Vijayanagar. He said that the grains gleaned in the harvest field, a handful of water from a tank, and a tattered loin cloth were enough for the body and that, rich as he was with the possession of heavenly treasures at Kāñcī, he had no need of earthly treasures.

In the field of scholarship, he had works both in Tamil and in Sānskrit, so that he is called Ubhaya-Vedāntācārya. His debate with, and overthrow of, seventeen opponents of different schools of thought, are summarized and immortalised in a Sanskrit-Tamil work under the name Paramata-bhaṅgam. He is the author of several hymns on the Deity in temples at Kāñcī and Śrīraṅgam. At the age of fifty, the Vaiṣṇavas at Śrīraṅgam invited him to face a challenge for debate from a group of Advaita scholars hailing from North India. He defeated them in this intellectual encounter lasting for seven days. The arguments he employed are now included in a highly philosophical work called Śata-dūṣiṇī. His chief philosophical works and Rahasyas [esoteric compositions] were written at Śrīraṅgam. In these he put up a full defence with necessary elaborations of Rāmānuja's Vedānta which had by that time provoked many criticisms from Advaitic thinkers. The most noted of these works is Tattva-mukta-kalāpa, which is a masterly re-statement of Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. He was not only a philosopher but also a highly gifted poet. His Saṅkalpa-sūryodaya, an allegorical drama in ten acts, has more divinity than the divine comedy of Dānte. So also his Haṁsa-sandēśa, on the lines of Kālidāsa's Meghasandēśa, is an improvement even on the work of that poet. He has also got a full-fledged Kāvya called

Yādavābhyudaya to his credit. By all accounts he was one of the most mighty intellectuals and poets that this country has produced.

But all these gifts were used absolutely in the service of Rāmānuja's teachings and the propagation of absolute self-surrender to Śrīman-Nārāyaṇa. More than his refutation of rival doctrines, his main contribution to Viśiṣṭādvaita doctrine consisted in establishing through Vedāntic methodology the truth of Ubhaya-Vedānta [the Upaniṣadic teachings in Sanskrit and the Ālvārs' exposition of Bhakti in Tamil hymns]. He explained the Upaniṣads in terms of the Divya-prabandha, and the Divya-prabandha in terms of the Upaniṣads, thus co-ordinating the teachings of the Ṛṣis and the Ālvārs. He bridged the gulf between Bhakti and Prapatti — salvation through devotion and salvation through self-surrender. He emphasized that, though the prime cause of salvation is the grace of God, the aspirant has to deserve it at least by seeking it or asking for it. Thus his mission was to complete the work of Rāmānuja.

After Pillailokācārya and Vedānta Deśika, the split between Tenkalai and Vaḍakalai tradition was consolidated by Varadācārya and Brahmā-tantra-svatantra and their disciples. The Tenkalais found their champion in Maṇavāla Mahāmuniṅgal. The points of difference between the two schools are eighteen. Some of them are: the Vaḍakalais insist on the integrity of Ubhaya-Vedānta and thus give equal importance to Sāṅskṛit and Tamil scriptures. Tenkalais stress the value of Tamil Prabandhas. The Vaḍakalais interpret the Vedāntic theory of the entry of the Infinite into the finite as co-existence, while the others look upon it as pervasion. On the status of Śrī, the Divine Consort, they differ. The Vaḍakalais consider Śrī as Vibhu or infinite like Nārāyaṇa, and ontologically one with Him but functionally different like flower and its fragrance. Tenkalais are more monotheistic, and reduce Śrī to the status of a Jīva. But both recognize the absolute necessity of Her grace for

salvation, as She is the divine mediatrix between the sinner and the utterly Holy, transforming the former into a Mukta [the liberated one] and the latter into his Saviour. In the functioning of grace, there is difference between them. According to Vaḍakalais, God's love for man must first purify the aspirant of all evil in him; but the Teṅkalais think that the love of God for one seeking refuge is such that He overlooks even his sinful nature. Grace is unconditional; otherwise it will be something like a right gained on fulfilling some conditions.

On the social side, Vaḍakalais insist on one's performance of all social and religious duties even after one takes refuge (prapatti), but Teṅkalais feel that the acts of the surrendered ones are amoral and should not be judged by the standards applicable to ordinary men following the rules of Varṇāśrama. Questions like moral laxity, their condemnation or condonation do not arise in his case. Their line of thinking in this respect resembles the ideology of the Advaitin's Jīvanmukta [the living free]. It will be seen that such extreme forms or theories of grace can easily end in antinomism, however much it might accord with Divine majesty and omnipotence. However complicating these differences might be from the dogmatic point of view, philosophically these are negligible. Vaiṣṇavism insists that love is superior to logic, though both have their place in a balanced scheme of life. The balanced view of the Vaḍakalais seems to be the safer path.

In conclusion it is important to point out that Rāmānuja's devotional philosophy had in a way a much wider field of operation than South India or Tamil Nadu. Many sects of North Indian Vaiṣṇavism had also their origin in his teaching. Rāmānanda (1300-1411), the fountain-head of monotheism and Rāma cults of North India, was a follower of Rāmānuja's sect, and was initiated into Viśiṣṭādvaita. But he went early on pilgrimage to the North and stayed there for several years. On his return the

caste-conscious Vaiṣṇavas of the South could not entertain him in their community. He was a spiritual liberalist who did not recognize caste as a factor in spiritual competence. Therefore he settled in Benares, and was practically the Guru, the spiritual stimulator, of the twelve great leaders of the Vaiṣṇava cult of the North. They belonged to all castes, including a cobbler and a Muslim. The most illustrious of them was Kabīr, who worked for the unification of Vaiṣṇava and Islāmic monotheism. Another disciple, Ravidās, a cobbler by birth, initiated the celebrated Mīrā Bāi into the meaning of Bhakti. Sena, a barber by caste, converted the Rājā of Bandogarh into Vaiṣṇavism. Dāna was a Jāt, and Pipa a Rājput prince. In later days, great leaders of monotheistic devotion like Tulsidās and Dādu got their inspiration from Rāmānuja's teachings.

Śrī Rāmānuja: Philosophy Viśiṣṭādvaita

Introduction

I

The philosophy of Śrī Rāmānuja is the most pre-eminent among the Bhakti Schools of Vedānta, both because of the profundity of the doctrines it expounds and the balanced devotionism it teaches. Barring Bhāskara's Bhedābheda (identity-in-difference) interpretation of Vedānta Sūtras, Rāmānuja's was the first comprehensive criticism of the Vedānta as expounded by Śaṅkara some three centuries before him. The other schools of Bhakti Vedānta that came after him have only taken up his criticisms and teachings with minor re-statements to suit their theological leanings. The common object of all these systems may be stated thus: They seek to establish the supremacy of the Divine Personality, known under the different sacred names of Puruṣottama, Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudeva, Kṛṣṇa etc., and equate Him with Brahman the Absolute of the Upaniṣads. For them the Supreme Being is Person with attributes and there is no Absolute beyond Him. They also lay stress on the exclusive position of devotion and Divine grace as the only means to overcome the hold of Karma on the Jīva and enable him to attain salvation. Salvation or release from the hold of Karma does not mean for them the mergence of the Jīva in Brahman, but attaining to the status of an eternal servant of His, which alone can give unalloyed bliss to the Jīva. Most of these teachings are mainly theological, but they require the backing of a consistent metaphysics to establish their credibility.

Among all the teachers of this devotional brand of Vedānta, Rāmānuja is the one, whose metaphysical genius

rivals that of Śaṅkara himself. He was a master of Vedic lore and methodology of arguments and exposition. While in his subsidiary works he leans very much on the devotional writings of his school of Vaiṣṇavism, in his main work the Śrī Bhāṣya or the commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa, he exhibits himself to be a pure Vedāntin, that is, the follower of the Upaniṣadic doctrine of Brahman, which of course is for him identical with Nārāyaṇa, the Divine Person.

The Upaniṣadic Brahman is the unity which comprehends in Himself all the diversities of common experience and yet remains unaffected and unlimited by them. Śaṅkara establishes that unity by reducing all diversity into a mere appearance like a snake superimposed on a rope in semi-darkness. According to him the darkness of ignorance is the cause of illusory presentation of multiplicity. All the time the multiplicity is perceived, it is not actually there, and the unitary Consciousness had remained unchanged. On the light of knowledge arising, the illusory presentation disappears without leaving any residue beyond the Non-dual One, which was always there unchanged as the substratum. He thus achieves the unity of all existence and the unchangeableness and unaffectedness of Brahman. This achievement leaves many problems unsolved and creates many others to be solved. He however gives a *prima facie* reality to the world of diversity from the practical point of view (Vyāvahārika Sattā), only to deny it absolutely in the end. An unmodified and attributeless Consciousness alone is the Ultimate Reality. Reality has thus for him two tiers — the apparently real and the truly real.

Rāmānuja is totally hostile to this Advaitic interpretation of the unity proclaimed by this brand of Vedānta. Unity is not the sublation of all diversity but the subordination of diversity to unity. His system is called Viśiṣṭādvaita, a term which, according to competent authorities, is not used by him anywhere in his writings, but came to be used later

to differentiate it from the other systems of Advaita, just as Śaṅkara's doctrine came to be called in later times as Kevalādvaita. Both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja considered themselves only as Vedāntins and for both of them their system is *the Vedānta*. The term Viśiṣṭādvaita is often translated as qualified non-dualism. Scholars disagree with this translation. The compound (Sandhi) is not Karmadhārayan but Bahuvrīhi, and its English translation will be the 'Non-duality of the qualified whole'. Von Buitenin has elaborated it as 'unity of the universe's spiritual and non-spiritual substances with, and in, a God whom they modify as His body'. A more compact translation is Pan-organistic non-dualism. In this system the world is ultimately true, the Jīva is ultimately true, God is ultimately true, and liberation from bondage is also factually true. Thus in effect it is a totally realistic theism in which God and the Absolute are one and the same. The non-dual all-inclusive qualified Whole is the Brahman of the Vedānta according to Rāmānuja.

While this metaphysical framework is established and argued with relentless logic and philosophical methodology of Vedāntic tradition, Rāmānuja's system gets flesh and blood by his devotional ideologies of the passionate devotees of the Lord Viṣṇu (the Ālvārs) that Tamil land produced from the 2nd to the 8th century. Thus Rāmānuja's Vedānta becomes philosophical Vaiṣṇavism. While he is a strict Vedāntin in his methodology and way of scriptural exegesis, he identified the Upaniṣadic Brahman with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, and this is his turning point from philosophy to religion. His Vaiṣṇavism is indicated in his early major writing the Śrī Bhāṣya, but becomes pronounced in his later writings. The account of Rāmānuja's life given earlier makes clear how these two streams of thought, the Vedic and the Vaiṣṇava, came to mingle in him.

II

Theism of Rāmānuja

In fact Rāmānuja's mission in life was this — to effect a rational and natural mingling of the rapturous devotion of the Ālvars with the Upaniṣadic quest of the ontological and unifying ground of the changing world of the many. Bhakti or devotion requires two — the adorable and lovable God who is a Person as also the Supreme Being on the one hand, and the devotee who finds his fulfilment in service of Him, on the other. The Vedānta of the Upaniṣads mainly preaches the doctrine of the Absolute Being, who is the non-dual source, substratum and dissolving ground of the many that constitute the world of our experience. “That out of which all beings come, in which they all subsist, and into which they are withdrawn is Brahman” — this is the watchword of the Upaniṣads. Brahman is all-inclusive and all-absorbing, and is described by such epithets as Sat-chid-ānanda (Existence-knowledge-bliss) and Satyam, Jñānam, Anantam Brahma (Brahman is Truth, Consciousness and Infinite). Śaṅkarācārya interprets this Upaniṣadic doctrine of the Absolute as the Non-dual Being in whom the world of the many is a mere appearance ascribed by Ignorance and not actually existing. For practical purposes he gives a *prima facie* reality (Vyāvahārika Sattā) to the world of the many and to God who is its cause. But this God (Saguṇa-Brahman) is distinguished from the Absolute, and His reality belongs to the same order as that of the world of the many that are said to be His creation. When Ignorance is overcome by proper metaphysical insight, the aspirant realises that what he considered as his ‘I’ is really the Absolute Brahman into whom the apparent world and its God too resolve. It is comparable to the appearance of a snake in semi-darkness and its disappearance in its substratum the rope on the removal of darkness. Both the world and God conceived as its cause are sublated and are realised as having had no real existence.

Rāmānuja totally differs from such interpretation of the Upaniṣadic doctrine which militates against the ultimacy of God and the supremacy of devotion. He criticises severely the theory of Ignorance and the compartmentalisation of Reality into Paramārtha (ultimate) and Vyāvahārika (relative or practical). To the question, what is the locus of Ignorance, there is no credible answer from the Advaitin. If it is Brahman, Brahman becomes loaded with evil and becomes unworthy as a spiritual goal. If it is the Jīva (individual spirit), the same defect persists, as the Jīva in its real nature is one with Brahman according to Advaita. If it is an entirely different category, dualism is the result. Besides, the Jīva is caused by the Upādhis (adjuncts) superimposed on Brahman and these Upādhis are the products of Ignorance. Thus Ignorance must precede the Jīva and cannot therefore be conceived as located in it. To describe Ignorance as a category that is neither existent nor non-existent nor a combination of both is to speak a language unknown to logical thinking.

Rāmānuja directs a devastating attack against the doctrine of a sublatale God who is less than the Absolute or the Supreme Being, against the theory of Ignorance which is without a definite locus and which cannot be described as existent or non-existent or a combination of both, and against the compartmentalisation of Reality into Paramārtha (the ultimately real) and Vyāvahārika (the relatively real), which means only that the latter is illusory.

Svarūpa and Svabhāva of God

He denotes the Supreme Being by such expressions as Brahman, Nārāyaṇa, Īśvara, Bhagavān, Puruṣottama, Viṣṇu etc. Brahman is not for Rāmānuja a featureless, attributeless, indefinite and vague presence unsuited for worship and adoration, but the Supreme Person with an archetypal form which however does not limit Him, as he can take any form and as He pervades every being as their indweller and container. In Himself, that is in his Svarūpa, He partakes

of the following fivefold characteristics. Satyam which means Truth unconditioned and changeless; Jñānam which means permanently uncontracted and all-comprehending knowledge as the Supreme Subject; Anantam which means Infinity or excellences unlimited by categories of time, space etc.; Ānanda which means immeasurable and unmitigable Bliss which the Taittirīyopaniṣad puts in multiplicative units; and Amalatva which means stainlessness or incorruptibility i.e. freedom from the hold of Karma which is the cause of all imperfections in Jīvas. Those five different attributes are not to be considered as five qualities of the same order. Jñāna (knowledge or consciousness) is not merely an attribute but the essential nature of Brahman. Ānanda is only another way of describing the conscious nature of Brahman. So Rāmānuja often describes Brahman as Jñānānandaika-svarūpa or one whose essential nature is solely Knowledge and Bliss. Truth (Satya), incorruptible purity (Amalatva) and Infinity (Anantatā) are integral with Him. All these constitute His essence as also His inherent attributes. They are known technically as His Svarūpa or inherent nature.

As distinguished from these are the attributes that form His Svabhāva. It is a word whose meaning cannot really be distinguished from that of Svarūpa, but it has received a distinct meaning in Rāmānuja philosophy. They are otherwise known as Kalyāṇa-guṇas or countless auspicious qualities. Svabhāva (auspicious quality) is distinguished from Svarūpa (inherent nature) as the qualities manifested in Him in relation to finite beings, while Svarūpa constitutes his inherent nature unrelated to anything. The characteristics forming Svabhāva are identified with the six qualities (Bhagas) described in the Viṣṇupurāṇa as powers characterising the Bhagavān (God). They are Jñāna (omniscience), Bala (omnipotence) Aiśvarya (lordship), Śakti (creative power), Vīrya (immutability) and Tejas (splendour). The auspicious qualities are, however, countless, the above-mentioned being the most important.

Some of the other important among these others are Gāmbhīrya (inestimable grandeur), Audārya (generosity) and Kāruṇya (compassion). In alluding to Brahman, Rāmānuja is always careful to enumerate one or more of these inherent and auspicious qualities of His. He wants to indicate thereby his total rejection of the Advaitic conception of Brahman who should be the locus of Maya or Ignorance and therefore loaded with all that is inauspicious.

In Rāmānuja's system, apart from these inherent and essential attributes of God, His Svarūpa and Svabhāva, God has another kind of attribute — the universe of Jīvas (souls) and Jagat (changeable and manifold Nature). Rāmānuja's interpretation of their relation to Him brings him into the field of metaphysics.

III

Rāmānuja's metaphysics

The idea of Brahman's Svabhāva necessitates a theory of His relation with the manifested Jīvas and Nature (Prakṛti). For, his being endowed with Bala (creative power) and Kāruṇya (redemptive grace) indicates the existence of a created universe of Nature and Jīvas. Rāmānuja's task as a Vedāntin is to formulate a theory of unity of all existence in the face of this multiplicity constituted of Nature (Prakṛti) and Jīvas. A doctrine of a perfect God may be good enough for a devotional religion; but a Vedāntic theologian has also got to formulate a theory showing how the unity of all existence is possible in the face of a constantly changing multiplicity, and also how a perfect and sinless Being can be inferred as the creator of a world that is full of sin and suffering. Rāmānuja as a Vedāntic metaphysician addresses himself to this task.

Apr̥thak-siddhi, "Sarīra-śarīrī relation etc.

Śaṅkara establishes this unity of Brahman by his theory of Adhyāsa i.e. superimposition of the multiplicity on the

unitary Brahman, the non-dual Sat-Chit-Ānanda. Ignorance, also called Māyā, is the cause of this super-imposition. In other words the multiplicity is ultimately unreal. As already stated, Rāmānuja totally rejects this theory. The plurality of Jīvas and the changeful order of Nature are for him even ultimately real. For changefulness does not make anything unreal. Their unity lies in the fact of their being held together in inseparable union (Aprthaksiddhi) in the Supreme Being called Brahman, Īśvara, Bhagavān, Nārāyaṇa etc. They have no existence apart from Him. The dependence therefore is not mutual, but entirely on the part of Jīvas and Nature. Technically this kind of dependence is called Aprthaksiddhi, irrevocably dependent existence. Even to speak of them as 'they' is an intellectual abstraction for analytical purposes, as they all form an inseparable whole with Him. Rāmānuja uses several expressive terms to describe this inseparable and integral unity. Some of these are Śarīra and Śarīrī (body and soul), Śeṣa and Śeṣī (the subordinate and the principal), Prakāra and Prakārī (mode and substance), Viśiṣṭa and Viśeṣaṇa (the qualified whole and the qualifications) etc. All these terms explicate the various aspects of Aprthaksiddhi or inseparable relation.

God or Brahman, who has been described before in terms of his attributes known as Svarūpa (basic nature) and Svabhāva (relational nature), has also got as a secondary attribute — a body attributively related to Him. That body is the collectivity of Jīvas and Nature. Body and soul are always organically related. In the case of the Jīva, when the Jīva is separated from the body, the body perishes, and it can no longer be called a body. As for Brahman, the Cosmic Body of Jīvas and Nature cannot at all be separated, as their dependence on Him is eternal and is in the nature of things. This body may be subject to changes of condition, but can never be destroyed or separated from Him. The dependence, however, is not reciprocal. That is, it is the body that is dependent on Him, and not He on it.

To explicate the implications of this doctrine of Śarīra-Śarīrī relationship between Brahman and the universe, Rāmānuja uses other expressions like Prakāra and Prakārī and Ādhara and Ādheya. Prakāra means a mode and Prakārī the substance to which the mode is related. A mode has no existence independent of the substance. Ādhara means support and Ādheya that which is supported, the former being Brahman and the latter the Jīvas and Nature. An entity that is a mode and a supported object depends entirely on the substance of which it is an expression. In the ordinary material sense a mode may be dissolved into its substantial base, and a dependent object dropped down from that which supports it. But in the case of Brahman and the universe this cannot happen. The mode constituted of the Jīvas and Nature may undergo change. But this is only contraction and expansion, which is called Pralaya (dissolution) and Sṛṣṭi (projection). In dissolution the Jīvas and Nature exist undifferentiated from Brahman but they do not lose their entity in so far as they have the potentiality to manifest again at the time of Sṛṣṭi or creation. As for the implication of Ādhara and Ādheya (supporter and supported) relationship, the dependence being inherent and irrevocable, there is no chance of separation as in the case of one worldly object dependent on another. Thus the meaning connoted by both these pairs of expressions only underlines the impossibility of a separate existence for the Jīvas and Nature, as Brahman is their eternal, irrevocable and natural substratum and support. They thus amplify the meaning of the body-soul (Śarīra-śarīrī) relationship.

Body-cell analogy

An analogy from the modern conception of a man's body can also illustrate this relation partially. The body of a man consists of millions of individual cells. The cells of the heart, of the lungs, the muscles, bones etc. are distinct in function, and every particular cell of these categories has got its own individuality. But they all form one with

the body, as they are bound together as a unified whole by the will, the life-energy of the body, and they exist and function solely to serve the interest of that individual will as a whole. Apart from the whole they have no existence, and if separated they will perish and cease to be cells. In the body-soul relationship of the Jīvas and Nature with God such a contingency as separation can never arise. For, their relationship is inseparable, though this may not be understood and experienced by the Jīva in the state of ignorance. This kind of irrevocable and non-reciprocal dependence of an object on its supporting object is called Aprthaksiddhi.

Scriptural authority for Śarīra-śarīrī relation

How such an unbreakable and non-reciprocal relationship is possible, is established by Rāmānuja not through reason, but on scriptural authority only. All the Vedāntic Ācāryas including Saṅkara, have resorted to the Scriptures for establishing some of their fundamental doctrines, and Rāmānuja is only following this Vedāntic tradition in supporting his doctrine of Śarīra-Śarīrī (Body-soul) relationship between Brahman and the manifested universe. His favourite Upaniṣadic quotation is from the Antaryāmi Brāhmaṇa of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (3.7) which runs partly as follows: (3.7.3 to 3.7.23.) “... He who dwells in all beings but is *within* them, whom none of the beings knows, whose body is all beings and who controls all beings from within, is the inner controller, your own self, and immortal.... He is never seen but is the Seer, He is never heard, but is the Hearer.... There is no other Seer than He, there is no other hearer than He, there is no other thinker than He, there is no other knower than He. He is the Inner Controller — of our self and immortal. All else but He is perishable.”

By establishing the body-soul (Śarīra-śarīrī) relationship between Brahman and the Universe, Rāmānuja not only secures the logical bond of inseparable union

between them, but also lays the ontological basis of his devotional and ethical doctrines of subservience to, and service of, God as the summit of the Jīva's destiny. Śarīra and Śarīrī (body and soul) are identified by him with the concepts of Śeṣa and Śeṣī. Literally Śeṣa means 'what remains' and Śeṣī, 'that which is the whole'. Theologically many other meanings are derived from it — some of them being servant (Śeṣa) and master (Śeṣī), accessory (Śeṣa) and principal (Śeṣī). Eternal service of God and being the instrument of His Līlā become the spiritual and ethical significance of this relation.

The self-body relationship indicates the essential difference between God and the universe without sacrificing the dependence and unity of the latter with the former. What a body is, Rāmānuja defines thus: "Any substance (Dravya) that an intelligent being (Cetana) is able completely to control (Niyantum) and support (Dhārayitum) for his own purposes and the essential nature of which is entirely subservient (Śeṣa) to that intelligent self, is his body." The implications of this definition can be analysed as follows:

- 1) The supported entities, the Jīva-jagat, are incapable of separate existence, from God the supporter (prthak-siddhi-anarha)
- 2) God is the controller and Jīva-jagat form the controlled, and
- 3) God is the master and owner and the Jīva-jagat are subservient to Him and form His disposable property.

In all theisms God must be the supremely adorable and infinitely good Personal Being who is distinct from the world and the multiplicity of spirits. He cannot be a qualitless impersonal Absolute intuited as the Self but not capable of being adored and not responsive to man's prayer and worship. The Vedāntic ideology, which has the unity of all existence as its central theme, has, however, necessarily got to be crowned with the concept of the Absolute which absorbs the many into a unity. But an Absolute as against God is unacceptable to theism. God and the Absolute must

be one, and while God is one with the many, He should not also be corrupted by the many. This is the philosophical problem for Rāmānuja to solve and he seeks to solve this by the soul-body theory, in which unity of existence is established without sacrificing the ultimate reality of the many, as the Adhyāsa (super-imposition theory) of Śaṅkara does.

It will be objected that if the Jīvas and the Nature are Brahman's body, then just as in the case of the individuals, the sufferings and corruption of the cosmic body of God must surely affect Him and make existence unbearable. The answer given is that in all schools of Indian philosophy except that of the Cārvāka (materialist hedonists), the soul's unaffectedness by body and its transformations is taken for granted. Besides, it is also maintained that even a man of enlightenment is in complete detachment even in the embodied state. How much so must be God who is the source of all enlightenment and is of the nature of consciousness (Jñānasvarūpa). So while metaphysically He is one with his Cosmic body constituted of Jīvas and Jagat, as a substance with attributes, He is unaffected by its corruptions. His Amalatva or freedom from impurities remains intact. In the case of Jīvas it is the hold of oppressive Karma that generates the spiritual blindness of ignorance and impurity. God is untouched by Karma and is therefore absolutely pure. The corruptions of the world cannot corrupt Him.

God as the great creator

Besides describing the Svarūpa and Svabhāva of God, Rāmānuja mentions Brahman's being the cause of everything (Sarvakāraṇatva) in a separate category perhaps to stress the unique importance of this characteristic. As a Vedāntic thinker with the unity of all existence as his main thesis, Rāmānuja is also bound to show that Brahman is both the material and efficient cause of the universe. For the

Vedāntin there is no independent plural existences like the Prakṛti and the Puruṣas of the Sāṅkhyas. For Rāmānuja they exist, but not as independent existences. They form one organic whole held together by the relation of inseparable dependence as a unity with God (Aprthaksiddhi). In the light of such a relation Brahman's causality does not mean that He created a non-existing world out of nothing. There is no absolute origination, as souls (Jīvas) and changeful Nature (Jagat) always exist as a part of Brahman as His body or mode. They exist in the two states of latency (Pralaya) and patency (manifestation or Sṛṣṭi). Pralaya and Sṛṣṭi are eternally continuing states of universal Nature like night and day, the motivating power behind the periodic movement being the will of God expressed in the scripture as 'May I be many'. For, in the Pralaya state the Jīvas and Prakṛti would be reduced to their primordial condition and would be latent in Brahman, without any distinction. In Sṛṣṭi, caused by the will of Brahman they gain patency and diversity through a process of evolution. This evolutionary process of Prakṛti is more or less the same as in the Sāṅkhya cosmology. Prakṛti, which is the balanced state of the three guṇas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas evolves by steps into Mahat, Ahamkāra, mind, Indriyas, the subtle aspects of the five elements, and finally into their gross aspect. But unlike in the Sāṅkhya, the diversification of categories is not in itself sufficient to complete the creative process. Brahman has to enter into these categories and cause them to intermingle in a way to form the various spheres and the bodies of living beings. Thus at every stage of evolution Brahman's will is operative and thus forms the efficient cause. In the creative process the Jīvas, which have become almost one with insentient Prakṛti in Pralaya, gain their separate identity and the bodies suited for their embodiment according to their deserts in the light of their Karma. The Karma is the effect of the actions of the Jīvas in previous embodiments which remains as efficiencies in Pralaya, and the Divine will causes the Jīvas to obtain

bodies suited for the enjoyment of their Karmas. It is to be specially noted that both in the latent (Pralaya) and patent (Sṛṣṭi) states, the Jīva ad Prakṛti form the body (Śarīra) or mode (Prakāra) of Brahman. The alternation of states does not in any way affect or alter this eternal integrated relation which has been described by the technical expression Aprthak-siddhi (non-existence in separation).

Theory of creation and problem of evil

This theory of creation has a great implication in Rāmānuja's uncompromising insistence on the Amalatva (untaintedness) of Īśvara. The possible objection to it becomes itself its strength. It may be argued that to be called 'the Supreme Cause' of the universe, it will be better to maintain that God created the soul and the world out of 'nothing' as Semitic religions do. Such a doctrine would have established His unquestioned and absolute omnipotence better. But this advantage is gained only through the attribution of all the evils, sufferings etc. in the world to Īśvara, and a very relevant question will be raised whether He is to be characterised as good or devilish. But Rāmānuja's theory of creation is not vitiated by this serious objection. Being an eternally recurring cyclic process, God is free from the responsibility of starting it and causing the evils accruing from it. It is Karma, the result of the actions of Jīvas in previous embodiments, that causes the good and evil, enjoyments and sufferings of Karma which have got necessarily to be enjoyed or suffered by those responsible for them. God does not create those efficiencies as He does not create Nature. Nature and Jīvas exist as His eternal and inseparable modes. God only wills the Sṛṣṭi or projection of Prakṛti into categories and their combinations. The shape these take depends on the Karma efficiencies of the Jīvas involved in the cyclic process of time. God only provides the manifesting power. He is not responsible for the evil and sufferings involved in the creative process. Rāmānuja thinks that by this interpretation

of creation and the law of Karma, he has justified his doctrine of Brahman's Amalatva or freedom from all impurity as also from partiality and cruelty, besides fulfilling the Vedāntic requirement of His being both the material and efficient cause of the universe.

In discussing the attribute of Brahman as the great creator, there arises also the question of the purpose of creation. As God is self-fulfilled (Pūrṇakāma), He can have no objective of His own to gain. Creation is therefore described as His Līlā or sportive manifestation. Sṛṣṭi (Projection) and Samhāra (withdrawal) of the universe, which are related to Him as His Śarīra (body), is a spontaneous process expressing His bliss of self-fulfilment without any ulterior purpose of His own.

But the question will be asked what justification there is for this purposeless play, which involves untold sufferings to the Jīvas involved in it. The answer given is that the creative activity is an expression of His beneficence towards Jīvas and not of callous cruelty towards them. For the Jīva owing to the accretion of Karma has almost become one with matter, with his conscious nature completely suppressed. His external consciousness (Dharmabhūta-jñāna) is in complete abeyance, although its inward awareness (Dharmī-jñāna or Pratyaktva) remains intact. His state, however, is as good as that of matter as far as awareness is concerned. It is through the impact of the creative process in various forms that the Jīva gradually recovers his suppressed external consciousness. Enjoyments and sufferings are the parts of this evolutionary process, and but for them the Jīva would have remained in its matter-dominated state for infinite time. Creation involving sufferings and enjoyments gradually enables the Jīva to become ultimately one with God in His joy and consciousness, though in entity he would, in bondage as in liberation, always remain distinct from Him in the Śarīra-śarīrī (body-soul) relation. The difference in the

condition of the Jīva in the two states consists in that in bondage, it is one with matter without its individuality being lost and in liberation it is one with God without his individuality being lost. Creation is the process that achieves this. Thus creation has a purpose in regard to Jīvas, though not for God Himself. It therefore reveals His beneficence and not any opposite quality.

V

The ethical and spiritual implications of the śārīra-śārīri doctrine

It has been already pointed out that according to Rāmānuja the essential nature of the Śārīra (the Jīva) is to be under the absolute control and support of the Śārīri (the Lord) and to subserve the purpose of the Śārīri. In terms of personal relationship the Śārīri (Īśvara) becomes the Master or Lord (Śeṣī), and the Jīva and Jagat become the liege or servant (Śeṣa). Īśvara, who has absolute control over the Jīva and Jagat (His body) and who can utilise them as He likes, is certainly their master (Śeṣī), as they are objects existing for His service or uses (Śeṣas). If the Jīva thinks that He is an independent and self-existent entity free to dispose of himself as he likes, he is under the influence of the false ego of ignorance which the bondage of Karma has generated in him. Independence of this kind is not in the nature of things in the setting of the Reality, as understood in Viśiṣṭādvaita. Knowledge for the Jīva consists in his recognition of his being only an absolutely dependent entity whose purpose is only to serve the Lord and not gain any personal enjoyment apart from it.

Here it may be objected that such a consummation for the Jīva is like consigning him to hell. All like to be free and not be subservient to others. Manu also says that all dependence on others (Parāśraya) is unhappiness; all self-dependence is happiness, and also 'Service is dog's life; so abandon it'. The answer given to such a very plausible

objection to Śeṣa-śeṣī-bhāva, is that this criticism is true only of dependence on, and service of, another who is unworthy of it, and of service undertaken for individual advantages of the ignorant body-bound ego. God, the Supreme Śeṣī (Master), is alone worthy of service. The Śeṣī (God) rules over the Śeṣa (Jīva) not by virtue of power, but because it is in the nature of things. Service of Him is therefore pre-eminently fitting. The forgetfulness that one is a Śeṣa (servant) of God is due to Karma-born ignorance. When this is removed by enlightenment and the Jīva realises himself as the eternal and natural attendant of an all-powerful, all-perfect and all-blissful Being, the Jīva only derives the highest bliss, and not the wretchedness of worldly subservience.

The sense of craving for bodily independence which a Jīva in ignorance feels is due to attachments and is no better than the feeling of independence it might feel in the body of a lion or a dog. But the sense of spiritual dependence born of the experience of being the part of that Whole, fulfilling whose purpose is one's nature, can only cause the highest bliss and sense of fulfilment to the Jīvas. It is the self-awareness of the Jīva as an entity distinct from body-mind and the consequent sense of his Śeṣatva (natural dependent status as a liege) in relation to Īśvara that generates in the Jīva true devotion (Bhakti) which consists in continuous and absorbing thought and service of Him. Such are the ethical and spiritual implications of the doctrine of Śārīra-Śārīrī idea and its allied doctrine of Śeṣa-Śeṣī relationship of the Jīva with Īśvara.

VI

Transcendence and accessibility of God

One of the great spiritual implications of Śārīra-śārīrī and Śeṣa-śeṣī doctrines is a reconciliation between God's transcendence (Paratva) and His easy accessibility (Saulabhya). It is evident that there is a tension between

transcendence and easy accessibility in one and the same being. Transcendence in this context can have three meanings:

a) Absolutely unrelated state after the creative act, as in the Deistic conception of God. That cannot apply here, because He not only projects from Himself the categories of creation but again enters into them to cause their combination. So He is the Śarīrin (indweller) of the Cosmos as a whole and of every part of it including the Jīvas. In its wholeness and in its particularity the whole cosmos and every part of it are the body (Śarīra) of Brahman. But He is not a contained object in them as water in a bottle. He is their container as well. He is infinitely beyond their dimension too. 'I remain permeating this whole universe by a particle of Mine', says the Gītā.

b) In His indwelling the universe, He is not in the least affected by it, as He is their soul. The imperfection and sufferings of this world are not due to Him but due to the Karma of Jīvas. It is Karma that creates bodily pains and enjoyments for Jīvas, but God, being without the bondage of Karma, is untouched. On the contrary His will to create is only an act of mercy of His for effecting the evolution the Jīvas under the domination of Karma. In the sense of His unaffectedness too, He transcends the universe.

c) Above all He transcends Prakṛti and the Jīvas in bondage by means of His supra-mundane (Aprākṛta) body in which He abides eternally in His Divine realm of Vaikuṇṭha. It is true that as the indweller (Antaryāmin), He is with a body constituted of Nature (Prakṛti) and all Jīvas from the creator Brahmā down to the lowest Jīva in bondage. But as already pointed out, only a 'fragment' of Him is involved in this aspect, and even in His indwellership, He is unattached and untouched by the transformations of Nature. Nārāyaṇa, with a body of pure Śuddhasattva is His inherent form (Svarūpāmśa). His inherent substance-attributes (Satyam (Truth), Jñānam

(Knowledge), Anantam (Infinity), Ānandam (Bliss) and Amalatva (Unstainable Purity) — constitute it and form what has been described earlier as his Svarūpa and Svabhāva. It is what is described in scripture as Avaṅ-manasa-gocaram — beyond the ken of words and mind. Only the Jīvas released from Samsāra can commune with Him. But it is the same Nārāyaṇa who, by virtue of His Omnipotence, pervades the whole Cosmos in its totality and its multiplicity of Jīvas and Nature. They constitute His body and He is their indwelling soul. In that sense also, Brahman is transcendent (Para) and accessible (Sulabha) at the same time.

VII

Saulabhya or accessibility in a special sense

In order to reconcile the tension between Paratva (transcendence) and Saulabhya (accessibility), the Śrī Vaiṣṇava literature uses a very telling analogy of an elephant and a lame man. The elephant is so high that the lame man has no accessibility to its neck by any effort of his. But the tall elephant can kneel down, and the lowly lame man can easily get upon it.

According to the Śrī Vaiṣṇava theology, the Supreme Being has four aspects. These are: the Para or Nārāyaṇa in His transcendent Status of Vaikuṇṭha; the Antaryāmin or indweller in the universe as a whole and in all its parts; as the Vibhava or special manifestation as Avatāra (Divine descent or Incarnation); and as the Arca or consecrated images in temples. It is the manifestation as the Incarnate and as images that stand for the extreme accessibility of Nārāyaṇa. Though twenty four or more Divine Incarnations in the species of Gods, men, animals etc. are mentioned in the Purāṇas, Rāmānuja lays stress chiefly on the two well-known Incarnations as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. In an Incarnation, Nārāyaṇa appears as a human being and lives among the humans, but He has got all the divine glory and

powers of Nārāyaṇa, just as the kneeling elephant retains all the elephantine characteristics even while kneeling. An Incarnation's body is of Śuddhasattva or pure stuff unalloyed by material nature. Though human in appearance, he is not born to reap the fruits of Karma like Jīvas, and is not the slave but the master of material Nature. The purpose of His descent is often described as the destruction of evil forces and establishment of Dharma. More than that, it is his Dayā, his inability to endure the sufferings which the Jīvas undergo in Samsāra, that prompts Him to 'descend' as the Incarnate.

Besides redeeming Jīvas during His earthly manifestation, He leaves behind him the highly evocative story of his activities and spiritual revelations, for example what is contained in the Bhagavad Gītā, both of which become direct means for man to attain salvation. The contemplation of the forms of the Incarnate and the accounts of His glorious achievements open a potent way of salvation for man for all time. For, the Incarnation being non-different from Nārāyaṇa, contemplation of Him is equal to contemplation on Nārāyaṇa.

The Avatāra doctrine has been excessively abused by the Hindus and today we have the strange phenomenon of every disciple of a sectarian Guru claiming him to be an Avatāra. Christianity has therefore limited Incarnation as a one-time phenomenon. The theory has its strong points and equally strong defects, but it surmounts the gross abuse of the doctrine indulged in by Hindus. As against the theory of a single-time Incarnation as in Christianity, one can maintain that what has once happened can happen again. This is also the question asked of those who hold that God has given a revelation once for all, as the Muslims maintain in regard to their scripture the Koran, and the Mīmāṃsaka thinkers among the Hindus who think of an unchanging Veda. It is reasonable to hold that holy Incarnations and revelation can be an ever-renewing process whenever there

is a necessity for the same. The test of time only can prove who is an Incarnation and which is a true revelation. Their value not only survives but augments by the passage of time. Their historical core is only the tip of the iceberg.

Incarnations appear only once in an age, and after they leave the human body, what is left for man to contemplate on is only the accounts of their lives and teachings. The elephant's kneeling position is not as yet low enough for the humblest of the humble devotees to get upon. So it kneels still more, and that is the Arca or the consecrated Divine image in great temples like those of Śrīraṅgam, Badari-nārāyaṇ etc. The image is of mute and inanimate metal or stone, but the eye of faith discovers the Divine Presence in it. Thousands of great devotees have invoked the Divine in it. The Divine presence in those images is offered worship with supreme faith and devotion. Nārāyaṇa, unlike Incarnations, is always there as the Arca for devotees to commune with through the senses of vision and touch and through devoted adoration. Unlike in South India, devotees are allowed in the North even to touch the Divine images in temples and make offerings with their own hands. This is helpful to give the devotees a feeling of direct communion.

To a critic not brought up in the traditions of temple worship, such worship will look like idolatry and still worse, fetishism. But that is because they have not got the eye of faith. Many such critics' adore their own type of images. The image-breaking Muslim adores the Kāba. The Christian who will not ascribe a form for God will adore Jesus Christ, and still worse take the consecrated wine and bread at the transubstantiation ceremony as the actual flesh and blood of Christ. Excepting pure rationalists, all critics who raise objections against temple worship, are motivated only by an antagonism to images other than theirs. Of course in the hands of hypocrites who are not endowed with genuine faith, image worship can degenerate into an unhealthy practice.

It is sometimes pointed out that Rāmānuja does not emphasise much on this idea of Arcāvatara in the major philosophic writing, the Śrī Bhāṣya. This must be only because the idea of worship of holy images is not prominent in Vedic religious tradition. It is however a part and parcel of the religious tradition that Rāmānuja inherited from the Ālvars, and he was not prepared to water down any of their devotional ideas to placate the intellectuals. In his own life we find him doing service to the Holy Image at Kāñcīpuram and accepting the managership of the great Vaiṣṇava temple at Śrīraṅgam.

VIII

The concept of Śrī as a factor in the accessibility of God

In the theology of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism, the concept of Śrī has great importance. It is on account of this importance attached to Her, the Divine Consort, that the system has come to be known as Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism and God as Śrīman-Nārāyaṇa, Śrīnivāsa etc. In Rāmānuja's major philosophical writing, the Śrī Bhāṣya, in which 'Śrī' is incorporated as a honorific prefix, there is not much of this Divine Consort in evidence, probably because he is there in his role as a Vedāntic philosopher. But in his more purely devotional writings like the commentary on the Gītā, Gadya-traya, Nitya-grantha etc, She is more in evidence. The general impression his writings give is that Śrī, the Consort, is co-eternal with Viṣṇu, that She is *anapāyinī*, ever united with Him. Even when He incarnates She is with Him.

But She does not play any particular part in the creative function of the Lord as in Śāktism of the Tantras. She is quite unlike Śakti, the female counter-part of Śiva, who is the sole active power in creation, Śiva being only the inactive Pure Consciousness. In some of the extreme forms of Śāktism, Śiva is termed as the Pañca-preta, the Five Dead. In Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism Viṣṇu Himself is the great creator

and Śrī is co-eval with Him and ever established on His chest along with the Śrīvatsa curl. Some sections of Śrī-Vaiṣṇavas, however, look upon Her as the first of Jīvas and therefore the first among Śeṣas (servitors).

What exactly is the function that Śrī fulfils? Rāmānuja, according to many authorities, is not very explicit on this, but the later savants of Śrī-Vaiṣṇava tradition accorded to Her the position of the Mother of the universe who extends the Divine accessibility to unworthy men even. Implying a division in the anthropomorphised conception of Divine Nature, Nārāyaṇa is described as the father who stands for justice and Śrī as the Mother whose love extends even to the most undeserving. It is the nature of the mother in actual life to have a greater concern for her weaker offspring than for the strong and the talented. This idea is extended to the Divine Nature through the concept of Śrī, the mother of the universe — not in the sense of the active creative power as in Śāktism but as an important element in the redemption of man. She is the interceder with Nārāyaṇa on behalf of all spiritual seekers, and in the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava rituals and forms of adoration, prayer to Śrī for Her grace must take the first precedence.

To the question how such a division in the Divine Nature can be justified, the only answer is that Śrī is not a different being but one and coeval with Him. That is why She is described in relation to Nārāyaṇa as 'Anapāyinī' — one who never keeps away from Him. Further the conception of Śrī extends and illustrates the scope of God's Saulabhya (accessibility). In Her we see the bending elephant lying almost flat on the ground for even the immovable cripples of sinners to get upon. The Śrī-Vaiṣṇava scheme of devotional practices has two aspects — Bhakti and Prapatti. The first is Upāsanā or continuous concentration on the Divine with the knowledge that one is a spiritual monad forming a Śeṣa (servant) of His, ending in its final stage in Prapatti or complete self-surrender. But there are

other humble folk who have no Vedic training or any philosophic understanding but who are endowed with strong and undiluted faith. In spite of their shortcomings even such ones can practise absolute self-surrender (Prapatti) and attain to Nārāyaṇa's Divine Realm. It is probably the grace of Śrī, which, like the fully flat elephant, that enables them to mount its height. Thus the concept of Śrī is an essential part of God's Saulabhya (easy accessibility). But this Saulabhya should not be understood as a conception making the attainment of God a cheap and easy affair. That potent self-surrender which accomplishes it is attained only through Divine condescension, which no price can procure.

IX

Dravyas or substance: Jīva or cit

We have concerned ourselves till now mainly with the concept of Brahman, the Supreme Being known also as Nārāyaṇa, Puruṣottama, Īśvara etc., in Rāmānuja's teachings. He is the most important of the six substances or (Dravyas) accepted in the system.* A substance or Dravya is defined as a substratum of attributes. The six Dravyas are Īśvara (Supreme Lord), Jīva (individual self), Dharmabhūta-jñāna (attributive consciousness), Suddhasattva (pure non-material stuff), Kāla (Time) and Prakṛti (Primordial Matter). All Dravyas or substances are divided into two main classes, the Ajaḍa or the 'Non-insentient' and Jaḍa or the 'insentient'. The negative 'A-jaḍa', non-insentient, is used for a particular reason which will be stated at the appropriate place. In the Ajaḍa category are included Brahman, the Jīva, Suddhasattva, and Dharmabhūta-jñāna. Brahman is of the substance of consciousness and consciousness forms also His attribute. Substance-consciousness is called Dharmī-jñāna, and attribute-consciousness Dharmabhūta-jñāna. The former is inward consciousness (Pratyaktva) and the latter outward consciousness (Paraktva). The former is self-consciousness

making one aware of oneself while the latter reveals things outside without being aware of itself. The difference between them can be illustrated partially by a material analogy. A wick light is a point of light in itself. It goes outward and reveals external objects. God is pure knowledge-substance (Jñanasvarūpa) and His Dharmabhūta-jñāna covers all existences. His Dharmabhūta-jñāna has no obstruction, because He is untouched by Karma, which is the cause of obstruction of knowledge. Thus self-awareness and other-awareness are complete in Him. Like God, the Jīva also is A-Jaḍa (non-insentient). It is of the form of consciousness (Jñanasvarūpa), but while being only an individualised form of Dharmī-jñāna (substance-consciousness), he has his Dharmabhūta-jñāna contracted because of the forces of ignorance, which in Rāmānuja's philosophy is the load of Karma. The familiar Avidyā category of Śaṅkara's philosophy, described as neither existent nor non-existent has no place in this system. Dharmabhūta-jñāna being suppressed, the Jīva is as good as insentient (Jaḍa) matter, but the potentiality of developing that external awareness (Dharmabhūta-jñāna) is in it, and the purpose of God's creative activity is to help the Jīva gradually evolve this aspect of consciousness, until it expands to that of God Himself. When the Jīva is liberated, he continues to maintain his individuality, but his Dharmabhūta-jñāna expands and becomes merged in that of God. It is like a small wick light kept before a blazing light of intense splendour. The light of the wick lamp continues to have its individuality, but its radiance becomes merged and indistinguishable from the blazing luminosity of the other.

Characteristics of the Jīva

Along with God the Jīva shares Pratyaktva (inwardness), Cetanatva (sentiency), Ānanda-svarūpa (blissful nature), Ātmatva (soul-nature) and Kartṛtva (agency). His special characteristics differentiating him from

God and matter are *Aṇutva* (atomic nature) *Śeṣatva* (being an accessory) *Ādheyatva* (supportedness), *Vidheyatva* (dependence), *Parādhīnatva* (working for a master) and *Paratantratva* (subordinate status).

Some of these terms require further explanation. *Pratyaktva* (inwardness) means that the *Jīva* is a monad, a self-conscious and self-luminous subject, always related to an object and revealing itself also while revealing an object. If there is no external object as in sleep, he is himself his object as it is self-revealing. Unlike in Śaṅkara's system, there is nothing like a subject-objectless consciousness in Viśiṣṭādvaita metaphysics. Such a conception is dubbed as a metaphysical fiction. Subject and object are just two ends of a line A-B: Without these two poles there is no line. So there can be nothing like a subject-objectless consciousness flying about. The *Jīva* is the subject with two kinds of attributes — *Dharmī-jñāna* and *Dharmabhūta-jñāna*. *Dharmī-jñāna* may be described as intrinsic consciousness of the subject revealing itself and *Dharmabhūta-jñāna* as attributive consciousness which reveals external objects to the subject. In bondage the attributive consciousness of the *Jīva* is contracted or very limited in the scope of its functioning.

Further, when the *Jīva* is said to be an *Ātmā*, it means that he is a spiritual Ego or 'I sense' ensouled in a body. The real nature of the spiritual ego is to be distinguished from the ego of the *Jīva* in bondage when it identifies itself with the Nature-born body-mind. Basically the *Jīva* is the body of God as His *Śeṣa* (servant). The body-bound ego is only a pseudo-ego. Liberating the true spiritual ego denoted by *Ātmatva* from identification with the pseudo-ego, is one of the central tasks in spiritual endeavour.

Jīva and moral responsibility

Kartṛtva (agency) implies that just as God has got the whole Cosmos as His body and works through it, the *Jīva*

has also got his body-mind with which he functions. But the will of the Jīva is subordinate to that of God.

Here arises an important ethical question confronting all schools of theism — the question of the freedom of the will which is necessary for moral responsibility. All Jivas in Samsāra are burdened with their load of Karma, which gives them not only enjoyments and sufferings but also desires and tendencies to act in particular ways. But these tendencies can find expression as actions only if they are energised by the will of God who is the Sanctioner (Anumāntā) and the over-seer (Upadraṣṭā). Under these circumstances the moral responsibility accrues only to the Jīva, as he acts according to the tendencies and deserts he has acquired by his Karma. God wills only their fructification. God in this context may be compared to a light which one may use for forging and another for reading scriptures. The merit or demerit devolves entirely on the persons concerned and not on the light. The Jīva in ignorance thus acts entirely under the perverted ego born of identification with the body-mind. But when through spiritual discipline he has realised that his being is only a Śarīra (Body) of God and therefore he is Śeṣa (servant) he does not entertain this false ego, and so all his actions are burnt in the fire of knowledge. He has no craving for the fruits of actions nor has he a sense of agency, except as being an instrument of the Divine. As all his evil tendencies must already have been erased before he attains this state of spiritual excellence, only virtuous actions in harmony with the Divine dispensation will be performed by him.

Some special characteristics of the Jīva

Among the characteristics that are special to the Jīva as distinguished from those described already as common to him and the Divine, atomic nature (Aṇutva) comes first. The word does not mean a particle, but a monad or a

centre of consciousness and bliss whose rays of attributive consciousness spread everywhere. Thus atomic nature indicates only an indestructible individuality and not a restriction of size which is applicable only to material substances. The departure of the Jīva from one body to another at death cannot be explained without accepting his monadic nature (Aṇutva). Jīvas are countless but all are of the same nature of consciousness and bliss. Thus this quantitative pluralism does not contradict qualitative sameness in this system. The essential implication of this characterisation of the Jīvas is that consciousness is not a characterless and baseless entity as in Advaita but associated with a subject, having consciousness as its substratum and also as its attribute.

All the other special characteristics of the Jīva spring from its being a dependent accessory (Śeṣa) and a mode (Prakāra) of the Supreme Being. A mode (Prakāra) has its existence in its supporting substance (the Prakārī). In the same way a dependant or accessory (Śeṣa) is always subordinate in status (Paratantra) and is subject to a master (Parādhīna)

Rāmānuja's system, unlike most of the other systems of Vaiṣṇavism, maintains the doctrine of Tāratamya or gradation in capacity of Jīvas only to a very limited extent. Jīvas are of three grades. The first and the most unique are the Nityasūris or the Eternally Free Ones, some of the most important of whom are Ādi-śeṣa, Garuḍa, Viṣvakṣena, Sudarśana etc. Ādiśeṣa is the serpent-bed on which He rests in His realm of Vaikuṇṭha; Garuḍa is His mount; Viṣvakṣeva is His chief officer; and Sudarśana, His principal weapon, the discus of unlimited potency. These Nityasūris form inseparable parts of Divine nature. They have never been in the bondage of Karma and Samsāra, and have always been in attendance on Him, being His principal Śeṣas. The name of Ādi-śeṣa for the serpent-bed indicates this. They

accompany Him also when He incarnates. They are included in His Nitya-Vibhūti or changeless manifestation.

Spiritual destiny of the Jīva

The rest of the Jīvas are either liberated ones (Muktas) or bound ones (Baddhas). The liberated ones are those who, evolving through all forms of bodies, at last come to the stage of human birth, and eventually attain salvation through spiritual disciplines and surrender to the Divine. By the grace of God they are liberated from Samsāra and raised to the Divine status of Vaikuṇṭha, where they get the new spiritual body of Śuddha-sattva. Being free from the load of Karma, their Dharmabhūta-jñāna now attains to its maximum expansion and becomes one with that of Īśvara. But their atomic nature (Aṇutva) remains, distinguishing them from the Infinity (Anantam) that God is. In the Divine Vaikuṇṭha they become His servitors or instruments of service, or remain absorbed in the bliss of Brahman. They become one with God in knowledge and bliss, but not in power; for Nārāyaṇa alone is the Great Cause of the universe.

The Jīvas that are not liberated evolve gradually in the cycle of Samsāra, experiencing births and deaths, according to their Karma, until they eventually gain salvation at the maturity of evolution. Unlike in some other Vaiṣṇava systems, there are no Nitya-samsāris or eternally bound Jīvas. Salvation is open to all.

In Rāmānuja's interpretation of the Vedānta there is no Jīvanmukti or liberation for the Jīva when the body is alive, unlike in the system of Advaita expounded by Śaṅkara. According to this latter system, Ignorance is the cause of bondage, and liberation is attained when Ignorance is removed irrespective of whether the body is alive or not. The body will fall only when the Prārabdha or the quantum of Karma that has brought the current body into existence is exhausted. But the removal of Ignorance and the consequent attainment of liberation have no necessary

connection with the fall of the physical body. But Rāmānuja does not accept that an embodied person can be liberated. For, according to him, the cause of embodiment is Karma, and Karma is exhausted only when the body perishes. The knowledge generated by Vedāntic study and spiritual pursuit can raise a man to the state of a Sthitaprajña, one of steady wisdom described in the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gītā. He may also have Bhakti and Jñāna of the highest order, but he is not liberated yet. When the body of such a devotee dies, the Jīva passes, as stated in the Kauśītakī Upaniṣad, through the subtler regions of the cosmos to Vaikuṇṭha. These regions or Lokas are Vāyu-loka, Varuṇa-loka, Āditya-loka, Indra-loka, Prajapati-loka and Brahma-loka. Then the Jīva attains to Vaikuṇṭha where he gets a body of Śuddhasattva. His Dharmabhūta-jñāna becomes all-pervasive like that of Īśvara Himself. He becomes a Satya-sankalpa or one whose wish always becomes true and a Sarvajña or an all-knowing one. He shares the untrammelled bliss of Brahman. He can get engrossed in the service of the Lord or become His object of use (Upakaraṇa) like bed, footstool, vehicle, umbrella etc. He is also free to be in a disembodied state. But ontologically he is eternally different from Īśvara in bondage and freedom, and he does not also get the creative power which is a unique characteristic of Īśvara.

‘Tat tvam asi’ or ‘Thou art that’ doctrine

In all Vedāntic systems aphoristic declarations of the unity of Brahman and the Jīva called Mahāvākyas have an important place. The declaration ‘Thou art That’ is one of the well-known Mahāvākyas, and Rāmānuja in his exposition of the doctrine of the Vedāntic Brahman and the Jīva has got to explain how it fits into his system. How can the little embodied being called the Jīva be identical with the Supreme Creator? In the pure Advaita system of Śrī Śaṅkara the difficulty is overcome by recourse to what is technically called Laksana or indirect meanings. These two

meanings are then interpreted as having a common reference i.e. they are shown to be in apposition or co-ordinate relation called Samānādhikaraṇya.

Take the statement: 'This is that Devadatta' with regard to a person. Here 'that' refers to a person seen in Madras in an unhealthy condition in a small room. The same person is seen sometime after at Bombay in good health and in a flourishing condition, and one says of him 'This is that Devadatta'. Here the two terms 'this' and 'that' Devadatta refer to the same person under different conditions and are in apposition (Samānādhikaraṇya).

In the Mahāvākya 'Thou art That', first we have to determine the Lakṣana or indirect meaning of the terms 'Thou' and 'That'. In the word 'Thou', which refers to the individual, if the body-mind, which is adventitious, is eliminated, what is left is pure Spirit. The word 'That' refers to Īśvara who is understood as the great creator in the direct sense. Creatorship is only an Upādhi, an adjunct, to Him, as body-mind is to man. So the word 'That' indicates the pure Spirit, when the Upādhi of the Universe is eliminated. We then get Brahman, the pure Spirit underlying both the terms, and thus the unity of the indirect-meanings of both the terms is established. To illustrate it by an example, a soldier has his uniform and sword as his Upādhi or adjunct. A king has the kingdom as His. If both these adjuncts are eliminated, what is left is only 'man', manhood is common to both. When in this way the indirect meaning of 'Thou' and 'That' are obtained, there is a commonness of reference in Brahman without any attributes. This is the Advaita interpretation.

Rāmānuja objects to this way of deriving the meaning of the Mahāvākya on two grounds. When a direct meaning of an expression is sufficient, it is illegitimate to seek an indirect implied meaning (Lakṣana), as it is done in the Advaita interpretation of the Mahāvākya. Next the Mahāvākya recognises 'Thou' and 'That' as different, and

what is required is not to interpret in a way as to deny this difference, which is doing violence to the Text, but to find out wherein their unity lies. Both the terms have their different identities but there is something in common between them bringing them together into a unity, and the correct interpretation of the Mahāvākya should bring out that unifying principle. Removing all the attributes from both the terms and establishing a bare identity is not true apposition (Samānādhikaraṇya). It is only a tautology. The expression Samānādhikaraṇya implies two or more attributes having an identity of reference. For example there is the expression Blue Lotus. Here 'blueness' and 'lotus nature' inhere in a common substratum without losing their individuality. Samānādhikaraṇya indicates such a subsistence of many attributes in a common substratum and not mere apposition as conceived in the Advaitic interpretation. Rāmānuja claims that his doctrine of body-soul (Śarīra-śarīrī) relationship between Īśvara and the cosmos as a whole and with every Jīva in it individually can alone properly accommodate this doctrine of identity. The Almighty God and the little Jīva can never be equated with each other. But that mighty Īśvara, who is the Indweller in the Cosmic Body, is also the Indweller in every Jīva. Every Jīva individually is the body of Īśvara, just as the Cosmos as a whole too is. In the great sentence 'Tat Tvam asi', the 'Tat' refers to Īśvara as the Indweller of the Cosmic Body and 'Tvam' refers to the same Īśvara who also indwells the Jīva and has thus got the Jīva too as the body. Thus all the bodies, the Cosmic and individual, are held in indissoluble adjectival relationship (apṛthaksiddhi) in the one Īśvara. 'Tat tvam asi' refers to that oneness of Īśvara. It is an interpretation in which only direct meanings of expressions are accepted, and the condition of Samānādhikaraṇya is fulfilled.

X

The Jaḍa (insentient) category: Prakṛti

Among the two main categories recognised by the Rāmānuja system, the Ajaḍa (the not-insentient i.e. sentient) categories are Īśvara and Jīva. We have been considering about them till now. As far as Jaḍa is concerned, the descriptive appellation in the first place refers to Prakṛti (Primordial Nature), the stuff of all material and insentient existences. While being independent of the Ajaḍa (sentient) category of the Jīva, it is not so in regard to Īśvara. In the description of the Śarīra-śarīri (body-soul) relation, it has already been pointed out that Prakṛti as also the Jīvas are in indissoluble relation of unity with God. They have as much ultimacy and reality as God Himself. But they have no existence apart from Him, though they have their own identities that are never lost. So the Prakṛti of Rāmānuja system is different in nature from that of the Sāṅkhyas, for whom it is an independent existence. Prakṛti is not in itself dynamic as in the Sāṅkhya, but functions entirely by the will of Īśvara. It is the substratum of the three Guṇas of Sattva, Rājas and Tamas. By the will of Īśvara, Prakṛti functions in a cyclic order of Sṛṣṭi (manifestation) and Pralaya (dissolution), each of which lasts through immense ages of time. It is a constantly changing category. In the state of Pralaya when it becomes absolutely latent in Īśvara without any external manifestation, it is often denoted in the Upaniṣads by the word Asat, 'non-being'. And when it is manifest in Sṛṣṭi, it is called 'being'. Because of its constant changeability also it is denoted as 'Nāsti'. It is not, however, non-being in the sense of non-existent but only in the sense of being non-manifested. In both the states it has its individuality related to Īśvara in the body-soul relationship. Its existence in the explicit and involved states is assured, as Īśvara cannot otherwise be the Great Creator. When Prakṛti and the Jīvas go into latency during Pralaya

in their Substratum, the Supreme Being or Brahman, Brahman is described as causal or Kāraṇa-Brahman. When they come into manifest condition Brahman is called Effect or Kārya Brahman. The idea is that the effect is always contained in the cause and never newly created. Prakṛti and the Jīvas always form an organic whole with Him in all states.

In Rāmānuja's system Prakṛti along with Karma is called Avidyā (Ignorance) and Māyā. Both these concepts are clubbed together perhaps because Prakṛti, activated by the Divine will, functions in order to bring the Karma of Jīvas into fruition. It is according to the Karma of Jīvas that they get material embodiments and identification with these material bodies. This identification, although it alienates the Jīva from Īśvara, is a necessary phase in their evolution. As has already been pointed out, there is no separate category called Avidyā or Māyā, which cannot be described as existent or non-existent, in Rāmānuja's system. Ignorance (Avidyā) is only Karma or Prakṛti. Among the vehement criticisms of Rāmānuja against Śaṅkara's Advaita system, that against the Avidyā-Māyā theory is only next to that against attributeless (Nirviśeṣa) Brahman.

The manifestation of Prakṛti from the state of latency (Pralaya) into patency (Sṛṣṭi) is in stages and in that sense may be called evolution. These stages are: a) Avibhaktatva when Prakṛti is latent in the Supreme as salt in water, absolutely homogeneous and without any distinctions or differentiation. b) Vibhaktatva when differentiations become possible c) Akṣarāvasthā where the different categories (Tattvas) are on the way to emerge. d) Avyakta, the state just before the emergence of the categories which are twenty four as in the Samkhya. Gross matter is the last to evolve. The categories are again, by the will of God, combined with each other into dimensions and world systems fit for the evolving bodies of Jīvas to inhabit and reap the fruits of their Karma.

In the combination of the final categories of elements of earth (pṛthivi), water (āpaḥ), fire (Agni), wind (marut) and ether (Akāśa), each combined particle contains a very small portion of all the other elements. Only they are in such small quantities that they are of no practical use. For example in the illusory perception of mirage or water in desert, what is seen under particular conditions is the water element contained in the earth. In the perception of the snake in the rope, the snake exists elsewhere and the minute portions of it exists in the rope too. That part is seen as snake. What is called illusory perception is not due to the absence of the object, but due to the very partial selective perception of it under certain conditions. Such perceptions have no practical efficiency. The water in the desert cannot be drawn, nor can the snake in the rope caught. Psychologically the object is present in the same way as it is experienced, as a real stimuli is received from the objects. The failures to see the prominent character of the object is due to certain inhibitions of the perceiving mind helped by external situation. The difference between the real and illusory perception therefore arises, not on account of the absence of the object, but from the selection of only certain parts of it in perception, and from the fact that the selected portion has no practical efficiency or usefulness.

As for dreams, Rāmānuja holds the theory that it is also a creation of God for the individual, just as the universe is for all. There is therefore no illusion in his system. When an experience of a thing lasts for a short time only and is not of practical efficiency, some wrongly call it illusory in the sense of a non-existent entity. It may be called changeful, as the whole of Prakṛti is. But for this reason such experiences cannot be described as illusory i.e. perception of a non-existent entity.

XI

Kala or time

Kāla or Time occupies a special position in the system. Generally, except Cit (i.e. Brahman and Jīva), all categories are supposed to come under Prakṛti which, being insentient, is called Acit. Prakṛti; as already described, is the substratum of the three Guṇas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. As the Sattva in Prakṛti is mixed with Rajas and Tamas, it is also described as *Aśuddha-sattva* (impure Sattva). Now outside the bounds of Prakṛti there is an entity called *Sattva-śūnya* (entity without the three Guṇas). This entity is what is called Time or Kāla. Being outside Prakṛti, Time does not dissolve in the Supreme Being like everything included in Prakṛti. It resides in Him, and it is through Time that the Supreme Being activates Prakṛti submerged in Him to evolve into the various categories. Though called insentient, it is a special *Vibhūti* (unique glory) of God, as the whole creative and dissolution process of Prakṛti is regulated by this category.

XII

Śuddha-sattva

Among the three elements of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas constituting Prakṛti, Sattva is considered *Aśuddha* or impure as there is admixture of Rajas and Tamas in it. The system recognises a category outside Prakṛti, designated as *Śuddha-sattva* or Pure Sattva, which has not even the slightest stain of Rajas and Tamas. For this reason it is not included in Prakṛti.

Though the conception of *Śuddha-sattva* is somewhat obscure, it has a very important place in the theology of Rāmānuja. It may be called the non-material Spiritual Stuff, of which is constituted the body of Nārāyaṇa, the realm of Vaikuṇṭha and all its denizens who are either Jīvas eternally free, or have attained liberation from the bondage of Samsāra. Prakṛti or *Aśuddha-sattva* (i.e. the combination

of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) forms the stuff of which all the world systems and the bodies of their residents are formed. Nārāyaṇa and His abode of Vaikuṇṭha are outside the pale of Prakṛti, and so the stuff of which they are constituted is also not within Prakṛti. The special feature of Śuddhasattva is that it is a stuff of consciousness which shows other things by itself but does not however know itself, unlike the Ātman described as Svayamprakāśa — a term which means that it shows others and knows itself. To put it in another way, Śuddha-sattva seems to be a stuff of consciousness without self-consciousness. Because it is a conscious stuff, it is classified as Ajaḍa (not Material), though it comes under Acīti (insentient).

This rather paradoxical concept of Śuddha-sattva is not much in evidence in Rāmānuja's major work of Śrī Bhāṣya, but in the Vedārthasamgraha it is clearly mentioned that the abode of Viṣṇu is made of Śuddha-sattva. In the later developments of his theology under his successors it comes into great importance. Its classification as Ajaḍa (not material) also is justified. It is the only means that helps the Jīva to know its nature and relation completely. Its revealing power consists in its being the only medium through which true knowledge emerges in the Jīva and enables him to attain liberation from this sorrow-ridden world. Until Śuddha-sattva flashes on his mind, the Jīva feels himself identified with material bodies owing to the oppressive load of Karma. The light of Śuddha-sattva however enables him to know his spiritual identity. It is because of this important function of Śuddha-sattva that it is classified as Ajaḍa (immaterial).

XIII

The divine name, form and abode

Rāmānuja's theism is far more personalistic than the so-called monotheisms of Semitic origin like Judaism, Islam and Christianity. In these latter religions the Supreme Being

is clothed with attributes that are generally found in noble personages and with intelligence and purposiveness. But God has no form in these religions, though He might be denoted by one name. Rāmānuja's personalisation is far more radical. As if to rebut the extreme Advaitic position that the Supreme Being is attributeless and beyond all name and form, Rāmānuja endows Him with all these in a superlative degree. The scriptural statement that He is beyond thought and speech means only that these can only give a very partial and segmented aspect of Him and that He transcends the capacity of comprehension of the impure mind.

In the Gītā it is said by the Lord: "Supporting this mighty universe with but one single fragment of My Self, I remain unchanged and transcendent." In the description of the Supreme Being given earlier in His body-soul (Śarīra-śarīri) relationship with the Jīvas and Prakṛti, the reference is only to this 'fragment' referred to above. His transcendent aspect is supra-natural and none of the common human means of knowledge like perception and reasoning can comprehend Him. It is only through Scripture, which is supra-human in origin, that we get an idea of His name, form and abode. The Supreme Being is indicated by countless names, each name revealing some of His attributes or extolling His exploits in His incarnations. Thus we have got Sahasra-nāma-stotras on Viṣṇu (Hymn of praise of Viṣṇu through a thousand names). But there are four or five names by which Rāmānuja most often indicates Him. These according to their particularisation and personalisation are: Sat, Brahman, Puruṣottama, Bhagavān and Nārāyaṇa. Sat, meaning 'Being', is the most generalised name, indicating that He is the Infinite out of whom a variety of finite forms come out, in whom they subsist, and in whom they periodically dissolve. Brahman is that which has Bṛhatva or quality of greatness and is of matchless excellences. His greatness is that He is the cause and the Lord of all. 'Bhagavān' indicates that He is the most

worshipful. It is the most general synonym applicable to Nārāyaṇa, the specific name of the Supreme Being. This name indicates also that He possesses six Bhagas or glorious powers described in Viṣṇupurāṇa (6.5.72-75). These are: Aīśvarya or sovereignty, which consists in unchallenged rule over all; Jñāna or knowledge, which is the power to know about all beings of all times simultaneously; Bala or strength which is the capacity to support everything by His will and without any fatigue; Vīrya or valour which indicates the power to retain this immateriality as the Supreme Spirit in spite of being the material cause of mutable creations; Śakti or power, which is the capacity to make the impossible possible; and Tejas or splendour which expresses His self-sufficiency and the capacity to overpower everything by His spiritual effulgence.

Above all the most intimate and personalised name for the Supreme Being is Nārāyaṇa synonymous with Viṣṇu. Nārāyaṇa means He who is the Ayana (dwelling place) i.e. the source, support and dissolving ground of all Nāras or Jīvas including inert matter too. The name Nārāyaṇa as denoting the Supreme Being is established on the basis of the Vedas and universally accepted texts like Viṣṇu Purāṇa and the Mahābhārata. Mahānārāyaṇopaniṣad, says: "Indeed then there was only Nārāyaṇa, not Brahmā or Īśāna (Śiva)." There are however in Viṣṇupurāṇa and other texts such passages as 'Janārdana assumes three names Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva to create, sustain and destroy', which seems to contradict this theory, Rāmānuja's answer to this is that such passages mean only that He (Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa) is the inner self of the whole phenomenal world consisting of these deities and other beings. Viṣṇu, mentioned as one of the trinity along with Brahmā and Śiva, is only a descent of Nārāyaṇa into the created world by His own choice. Besides, words like Śiva mean, 'pure' and Śambhu 'auspicious'. They can be adjectivally applied to Nārāyaṇa. Since Nārāyaṇa is the Indweller in Brahmā, Śiva etc., these terms

ultimately refer to Nārāyaṇa only. All beings from Brahmā down to inanimate objects are subject to Karma and bound to material bodies and are incapable of giving liberation to aspirants. Nārāyaṇa only is the worthy object (Śubhāśraya) of meditation and worship for those who want to be liberated from the bondage of Karma, as He alone is not bound by Karma but is its controller.

Form and abode

Just as God has a special name, though He may have several other subsidiary ones too, He has also got a special Divine Form which is not a manifestation of a Formless Consciousness or a temporarily assumed one to favour a worshipper, but an ultimate fact. It is one with His unique and inherent nature (Svarūpa). There is nothing anthropomorphic about it, though its description may convey that idea. To counteract this misapprehension, the excellences of The Divine Form are given in infinite multiples of anything human. That Form is described as follows in Gītā Bhāṣya: "His one permanent celestial form is a treasure store of infinite qualities such as radiance, beauty, fragrance, tenderness, charm and youthfulness which are inconceivable, celestial, wondrous, eternal, flawless, supremely excellent and appropriate to Him." In the Vaiṣṇava tradition, this form of Nārāyaṇa is made of Śuddha-sattva, which has been described as a spiritual stuff not included in Nature (Prakṛti). There is however a view that in Rāmānuja's own writings, he appears to take the form on the same level as inherent attributes (Svarūpa) described earlier — Truth, Knowledge, bliss, purity and infinity —, which means that His form is of their stuff and not of Śuddha-sattva.

He dwells in Vaikuṇṭha or Paramapada which is not included in Prakṛti. The natural senses and intelligence of man, which are vitiated by impure matter, cannot experience this form in Paramapada, but to the pure mind of an

intensely devoted aspirant, He will reveal it. Vaikuṇṭha of divine splendour and the bodies of all its denizens consisting of Nārāyaṇa's constant attendants (Nityasūris) and liberated Jīvas are made of Śuddha-sattva. Time, to which all entities included in Prakṛti are subject, has no sway over it.

This abode of Nārāyaṇa and His form are described as follows in the famous text called Stotra-ratna by Rāmānuja's preceptor Yāmunācārya in Verses 30 to 46 of that Text. "When shall I see with my eyes the lotus feet of Thine, my dearest treasure which sportively spanned the world high and low in one stride; and which are waiting eagerly for the moment for destroying the afflictions of those who submit themselves unto Thee. O Trivikrama, when will Thy lotus-feet bearing the marks of conch, discus, the wish fulfilling-tree, banner, lotus, hook and thunderbolt weapon adorn my head? O great Lord, who art beautifully clad in shining yellow raiment, whose pure splendour is equal to that of blooming flax flower, who is endowed with a deep navel, slender waist, high stature and shining Śrīvatsa mark on the broad chest; who shines with four auspicious arms which reach up to the knees and have the rough scars of the bow-string, and which speak of their contact with the crest-lily, the ear ornament and the loose curls of the braid of Thy Beloved; whose conch-like neck is adorned with curls of hair and ear-rings hanging over the high and large shoulders, and by the lustrous beauty of whose face the brilliant splendour of the spotless moon and the blooming lotus are put to shame; who has eyes charming like the petals of a fresh and full blown lotus; gracious creeper-like brows, splendid lips, pleasant smile, soft cheeks, prominent nose and curls hanging upon the forehead; who is handsome with a shining diadem, bracelets, garland of pearls, necklace, the Kausthubha gem, girdle, anklets etc., and discus, conch, sword, mace, the excellent bow Sāraṅga, and a chaplet of beautiful fragrant Tulasi; who has made His breast the abode of Śrī whose birth

place is Thy beloved abode, in whose side-glance the entire universe has taken refuge and for whose sake the ocean was churned and causewayed; who art seated with Śrī, who by Her beauty, agreeable sports and merciful deeds is a match for Thee and Thee alone, and who creates unprecedented delight for Thee as one separate from Thee though She is eternally comprehended in Thy cosmic forms; who art seated on the great serpent Ananta (Ādiśeṣa) who is the sole seat of excellent knowledge and strength, within the Divine Abode of Vaikuṇṭha, the inside of which is illumined by the circle of rays emanating from the clustered gems on the hoods of the serpent who is aptly designated by devotees as Śeṣa on account of the different forms he has assumed for serving Thee such as residence, conch, seal, sandals, raiments, pillow, and shelter from the sun and rain; who has at hand for service Garutman who is the servant, friend, mount, seat, banner, canopy and fan and whose figure is made up of the Three Vedas and who is beautiful with the scars due to contact with Thy feet; who approves with noble glances whatever communication is brought to Thee by Thy beloved chief of hosts, Viṣvaksena, who partakes of the remnants of Thy food and on whom has been bestowed the charge of Thy sovereignty; who art served by the Eternal ones suited to Thee on account of their possessing the attributes of omniscience etc., — the Eternal Ones who are free from all the impurities of afflictions such as nescience, egoism etc., whose sole delight consists in being spontaneously devoted to Thy service and who constantly wait upon Thee with the respective means of service; who of long arms, exhilaratest Thy queen Śrī with lovely and skilful sports consisting of diverse new sentiments and emotions and which makes time divided into aeons and so forth a fraction of a moment; who art the nectar-ocean consisting of beauty and of the nature of eternal youth, unthinkable divine and wondrous, the support of Lakṣmī or Śrī, the sole subsistence of the devotees, possessor of power, the friend rescuing from

distress, and the wish-fulfilling tree to the suppliants. Constantly waiting on Thee alone with all the other desires quenched — when shall I, an eternal servant of Thine and Thine alone, delight Thee. having Thee as the Lord of my life!”

Philosophers often criticise, even ridicule, Rāmānuja on the ground that, in spite of being the great thinker that he shows himself to be in his Śrī Bhāṣya, he should be so childish as to dwell so much on what appears to them an anthropomorphic form of God and a dwelling place where he stays with His consort, ministers, attendants and the like. Such critics look at Rāmānuja from the point of view of their arm-chair philosophy. Rāmānuja's main interest in philosophy was to link the Vaiṣṇava devotionism of the Ālvars with the Vedānta which seeks to find out the unity behind diversity. His philosopher critics forget this and assume that he should have abandoned his Vaiṣṇavism when he took up the role of a philosopher. For him rapturous devotion to a personal Deity is far more important than the hair-splittings of philosophy. To subvert the criticism of anthropomorphism, he seeks to enhance the excellences of Nārāyaṇa thousandfold of what is human. It is not that the Nārāyaṇa concept is an exaltation of human form and qualities. What is human is only a distorted presentation of Nārāyaṇa's excellences.

Besides being a man of spiritual enlightenment, he knew that ordinary man requires a very concrete conception of God if he is to focus his attention on the Divinity and gradually attain spiritual insight. Concentration on a formless abstract Consciousness endowed with attributes that are seen only in a concrete human personality may be advocated by persons who consider themselves highly civilised, but the practice of it is impossible except for very highly advanced aspirants. In the Semitic religions which uphold the idea of a formless God with human attributes, religion becomes gradually the acceptance of certain dogmas and

social practices. Prayers become petitions addressed to some vague entity. Gradually social cohesion, and not spiritual experience, becomes their aim, and religion becomes highly politicised.

If the Supreme Being is the source of this whole universe, which is only a conglomeration of a most amazing variety of names and forms, and if He can be endowed with qualities and excellences that are human, what reason is there to consider it sacrilegious to hold that He has a name and an archetypal Form, which is not a single form but a multiform. So there are Indian theologians who consider it proper to adore the Divine in any form that a particular cult upholds, provided there is the basic understanding that the Deity is an expression of the Universal Being, the Sat-chit-ānanda of the Upaniṣads. Among such thinkers is Bhāskara the propounder of the Bheda-bheda doctrine and Śaṅkara the pure Advaitin at the level of the Vyavahāra or *prima facie* level. They preceded Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja too will not object to worship of various Deities provided it is accepted that Nārāyaṇa indwells every Deity and the worship done to the Deity is really to Nārāyaṇa. This is the farthest limit of liberalism he is prepared to accept. For Nārāyaṇa and Nārāyaṇa alone is that Archetypal Form, and other Deities can only be His partial manifestations. Nārāyaṇa with the Archetypal Form described before is Brahman. He is not an Impersonal Absolute. There is nothing above Him.

Now a relevant question in connection with the form of Nārāyaṇa is whether the God of Rāmānuja's system has got two bodies. Being the Śarīri (indweller) of the Cosmos as a whole and in parts, He has got a Śarīra (body) constituted of all the Jīvas and Nature. It is also claimed that He has got a Divine Body which is in Vaikuṇṭha beyond the range of Prakṛti. How is this to be reconciled? Śarīra-Śarīrī doctrine is the core of Rāmānuja's metaphysics entitling him to the claim of a great Vedāntic thinker. Does not his

theology of Nārāyaṇa in Vaiṣṇaṭha contradict this? The answer is that the transcendence of God is as important a Vedantic doctrine as of His immanence. Though immanent, His being is not exhausted thereby, nor does He become identified with Nature as in a pantheistic doctrine. His immanent aspect is only an insignificant part of Him. "Permeating the whole universe by a particle of mine, I remain transcending it", says the Gītā. The Tripād-vibhūti - mahā-nārāyaṇopaniṣad speaks definitely of four Pāda's (parts or aspects) of Reality — Avidyā-pāda (Ignorance Aspect), Vidyā-pāda, (Knowledge Aspect), Ānanda Pāda (Bliss Aspect) and Tūrīya-pāda (Transcendent Aspect). Avidyā-pāda alone is completely distinguished as a gross manifestation modified by ignorance (Avidyā), while the other three are treated together as a unity of the subtle (Sūkṣma), the potential (Bīja), and the Transcendent (Tūrīya) aspects of Reality, free from the sway of ignorance. Unlike in the case of Avidyā-pāda, there is in the unity of the other three, the Pure Radiance of Sentieny and unalloyed Bliss. In that Radiance is manifest the eternal Vaiṣṇaṭha, with which Mahāviṣṇu is identified.

Apart from this Vaiṣṇava Upaniṣad; it is a well-known fact that Vedas and the Upaniṣads often speak of the four Pādas (aspects) of the Supreme Being, of which only one is manifest and the rest are transcendent. So to establish the metaphysical relationship of the manifested world with the Supreme Being as His body does not militate against His having a transcendent Body of Śuddha-sattva, or as some will put it, of one of His attributes called Svarūpa (inherent nature) discussed earlier. His having that Archetypal Form of Nārāyaṇa does not make Him a mere individual like those endowed with material bodies. He manifests Himself as Avatāras of various kind. These are the four Vyūhas consisting of Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. They have all bodies of Śuddha-sattva. They are not different Deities springing from

a causal Deity but the presentations by the same Deity to control and direct the cosmic processes. Next there are three Guṇā-vataras Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara for creation, sustentation and dissolution, and there are various līlā-vatāras known generally as incarnations proper in Hindu theology. Thus Rāmānuja's idea of Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha with a particular Archetypal form does not militate against his Śarīra-śarīrī doctrine according to which Prakṛti and Jīvas form the body (Śarīra) and the Supreme Being is the Śarīrī (the Indweller). The latter is His Nitya-vibhūti (eternal and intrinsic nature) and the former His Līlā-Vibhūti (sportive and changeful nature).

XI

The doctrine of Bhakti (devotion)

It has been stated in the early sections of this thesis that Rāmānuja entered the field of philosophy and theology only to provide the required intellectual support to the heritage of passionate love of God that the Ālvārs had left for mankind. His teachings on Bhakti are therefore addressed to both intellectuals who want such a support as also to simple souls who have naturally got unalloyed faith in God and submission to His will.

Bhakti is described as knowledge of the Ultimate Reality as one's highest treasure and the consequent excessive adoration and attachment to Him. It is not a mere feeling, but conviction consequent on the knowledge of our ultimate relationship with Him that generates love and attachment to Him. Rāmānuja therefore equates Bhakti with Dhyāna and Upāsana. Dhyāna means concentration of mind on Him and Upāsana continuous thought of Him.

How can this state of mind be obtained? — is the question that comes to a spiritually interested student of philosophy. For the benefit of such enquirers, Rāmānuja's system divides Bhakti into three stages of development —

Sādhana Bhakti (practice of devotional means), Parā-bhakti (higher devotion), and Paramā-bhakti (supreme devotion).

The first requisite for an aspirant at the stage of Sādhana Bhakti is a strong faith in God as the highest value and a sense of the utter transitoriness of worldly achievements. He will then have to turn to the scriptures and teachers who impart the doctrines regarding the Self, Nature, and God. Duties of life have to be done without attachment, and for success in this one must have an understanding of oneself as the Ātman (Atmāvalokana). For this, Karma Yoga and Jñāna Yoga have to be practised together, as they are mutually involved. This, according to Rāmānuja, is the import of the whole teaching of the first six chapters of the Gita. By pure contemplation a highly qualified aspirant can try to overcome the identification of the Ātman with the body. But this is very difficult, almost impossible for the average aspirant. He has therefore got to work, fulfilling the duties of life without desire for the fruits of actions, which are to be made an offering to God. Work and cultivation of knowledge have therefore to be combined. There is thus no opposition between Karma Yoga and Jñāna Yoga in Rāmānuja's doctrine. They are mutually complementary.

The various details of disciplines that are to be practised for developing the Sādhana Bhakti into Prema Bhakti (loving devotion) are as follows:

- 1) Viveka: Practice of discrimination. While it applies to all things that are taken in through the senses, Rāmānuja's system specially emphasises the need to be discriminate in taking food i.e. eat only things that are Sāttvika or purity-generating and are prepared and served only by persons and in conditions that are pure.

- 2) Vimoka: It consists in resisting impulses of passions like anger, sexuality, jealousy etc.

3) *Abhyāsa*: It is the practice of all disciplines like worship, Japa, collective singing of the Lord's name, visiting holy places etc. which remind one of God as the Indwelling Principle (Śeṣī) in oneself and the whole universe.

4) *Kriyā*: This consists in the performance of the five-fold duties of life. These are: a) The duty to the Divine Spirits or the Devas by performing fire-sacrifice like Agnihotra; b) The duty to the Ṛṣis. The Ṛṣis, the great seers, have propounded the Vedas, Purāṇas, and all holy literature for man to study and contemplate on. Man fails in his duty to them if he does not devote some time to such studies; c) The duty to the ancestors: it consists in the performance of Śrāddha and daily ceremonial rites to keep up one's link with one's ancestry; d) Duty towards man: This consists in the discharge of all one's social and professional duties and contributing one's mite towards giving food, education, relief of suffering etc., in regard to one's fellow beings who are in need of such services; e) Duty to brute creations. Animals and plants play an important part in social welfare. They are also God's creation. Their wanton destruction and over-exploitation should be avoided and an attitude of harmony with their life should be cultivated.

5) *Kalyāṇa*: It consists in the practice of virtues like truth (Satya), straight-forwardness (Ārjava), kindness (Dayā), benevolence (Dāna) and love of all beings (Ahimsā).

6) *Anavasāda*: It means freedom from despair, pessimism etc., and preservation of a cheerful and positive attitude of mind.

7) *Anuddharṣa*: It is the capacity not to yield to excitement, or depression and to preserve an even temperament in all situations.

By the long and continued practice of these moral disciplines, by the practice of detachment through discriminative knowledge combined with work, and by the

practice of Dhyāna (concentration) and Upāsanā (continuous thought of God), the mind of the aspirant gets purified and develops the power to perceive the Divine as his inner self. At this stage his faith is strengthened by the glow of love and develops into Parā-bhakti when the mind, even without any external stimulation, goes towards the Lord in place of sense objects. This is intensified when the devotee begins to feel the great attraction of the Lord, and Bhakti is said to develop then into the stage of Paramā-bhakti. The devotee becomes mad with love and longing, and is always in intimacy with the Divine. Paramā-bhakti is the same as what is known in this system as Prapatti when attachment to God becomes the sole music of one's life and one is immersed in the bliss of the Paramātmān. There are however some differences between the conceptions of Bhakti and Prapatti, which are explained in the next section.

It should be specially noted that Bhakti of this kind is not a state of emotional excitement that comes up like an effervescence and then perishes. It is the result of the higher knowledge as distinguished by the lower knowledge described earlier as a part of Karma Yoga. That lower knowledge is the understanding that one is the Ātman and not the body. It is on the basis of this Ātman-knowledge that Upāsanā or continuous communion with the Divine becomes perfect. Then there arises in the aspirant the higher knowledge that he is merely a Śeṣa (a part or liege of the Lord) and that the Lord is the Śeṣī (the Whole or the Master). It is the feeling-pattern generated by the dawn of this higher knowledge that expresses as Paramā-bhakti. To know is to love, and knowledge and Bhakti become identical.

There is a view that this Paramā-bhakti is identical with what is known in this school as Prapatti or taking Refuge in God. The topic is discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

XII

The doctrine of Prapatti

The devotional attitudes that enter into the act of taking Refuge (Prapatti) are as follows: 1) Resolve to subordinate one's will always to the Divine will. 2) Avoidance of all that are contrary to His will. 3) Firm faith that God is the saviour of all. 4) Acceptance that God's protective grace is always with one. 5) A feeling of one's pitiable state owing to a realisation of the insufficiency of all self-effort made for one's salvation. 6) Resigning oneself absolutely to His care and protection.

All these attitudes of mind are involved in Paramā-bhakti, and in this sense both Prapatti and Paramā-bhakti are identical. But it will be noted that Paramā-bhakti is the end product of a long and difficult course of discipline of the head and the heart described earlier in the section on Bhakti. The intellectual equipment and the social environment required for it is available only for a few. Prapatti is therefore considered an independent path for others, provided they can cultivate the mental attitudes mentioned earlier. These attitudes can be summarised as unalloyed and unshakable faith in God and His saving grace. The Prapatti doctrine holds that a single moment of resignation with this attitude of mind is enough to bring the Lord's grace operative on the Jīva. The effect is immediate and non-laborious. Prapatti is therefore considered even superior to Bhakti.

Prapatti was the means by which Rāmānuja made the grace of devotional doctrine available to men of lower castes who were excluded from Vedic study and therefore of the Upāsana inculcated in the Vedas. The teachings on this topic are not reflected as much in his Śrī Bhāṣya as in his commentary on the Gītā and his purely devotional writings like Vaikuṇṭha Gadya. Strong faith in God, resignation to Him and non-attachment are the qualities that link man with

Him and elicit His grace. These are more fundamental for salvation than the self-effort of man. In fact the object of all self-effort is to generate this congenial mental attitude for grace to work upon the aspirant's mind. If simple and unsophisticated people, humble by birth and upbringing, have got this naturally, it is reasonable that the grace of God lifts them up from Samsāra. It is this consideration that gave Prapatti such an important place in Rāmānuja's doctrine.

While the doctrine is very noble and brings a much larger cross-section of humanity within its ambit than the Bhakti doctrine, one also feels that it is an over-simplification that may lead the doctrine into abuse and vulgarisation. For, the type of faith leading to instantaneous and absolute self-surrender is rarely found either among the masses or the classes.

Love of God for His special devotees

The doctrine of Prapatti has, in a social sense, made the devotional doctrine accessible to a much larger circle beyond the learned and the high-born. The transcendent Being making Himself available even to the weak is symbolised by the analogy of the elephant kneeling down, so that those who cannot ascend to its height may also get upon it. It is an act of condescension. Here God makes Himself available without giving up His supremacy (Gāmbhīrya). But there is a situation in which God surrenders Himself to the devotee more than the devotee surrenders to Him. That is in the case of the devotee whom the Bhagāvad Gītā calls the 'Jñānī'. Four types of devotees — the grief-stricken, the enquirer, the boon-seeker and the knowing-one (Jñānī) — seek and adore Him, says Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā. All of them, He says, are Udāra, generous gift-makers i.e. makers of self-surrender. But the knowing one (Jñānī) is as good as His own self. The Lord seems to be regardless of His own supremacy (Paratva) in making

this statement. Who is the Jñānī? Not a learned man or a Jñānī in the lower sense of one who has cultivated detachment of mind to some extent. A Jñānī is one to whom the consciousness of his being only a Śeṣa, (instrument, liege) of Īśvara, who is the only Śeṣī (Principal, Master) in the universe, has become natural, and who therefore lives in utter peace to fulfil the Lord's will alone, without any thought of his own future. If the aim of all study of the scriptures and the practice of Jñāna, Karma and Bhakti Yogas is only to attain to this consummation, then those who have it naturally have the special grace of the Divine. Irrespective of whether it is gained after long striving or in a moment by Divine grace, those who are in the state of utter self-surrender, the Jñānis, are God's special devotees, and the Lord regards them as His own self. Their generosity (Audārya) in the matter of surrendering their 'self' to the Lord is absolute and no remnant of the self is left.

It is with regard to such devotees that Rāmānuja says in his Gītā-bhāṣya, commenting on Verse 18 of the 17th chapter, "I look upon the Jñānī as my very soul, and therefore without him I cannot sustain myself." Just as the Jñānī cannot sustain without the Lord, the Lord, as it were, reciprocates that sentiment by the inseparable bond of love for the devotee. So Rāmānuja describes the Lord as '*āśrita-vātsalya-vivaśaḥ*' — one who is overwhelmed by His Vātsalya (tender protective love) for the devotee who is absolutely dependent on Him. The use of the term *Vātsalya* gives a further depth of meaning to the expression. A *Vatsa* also means a calf, and *Vātsalya* therefore means the self-forgetting protective love that a cow shows towards its new-born calf. In the presence of such a love the accessibility (Saulabhya) of the Lord overshadows His Paratva (transcendence). The two contradictory aspects of Īśvara are reconciled in this highest region of God-love. It is said that God loves such devotees more than Himself

and humbles Himself before them abandoning His majesty (Gāmbhīrya). So in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa (9.4.63) it is said by Viṣṇu: "I, to whom devotees are dear, am like a slave without any freedom. For, my heart is in the grip of such holy devotees."

Rāmānuja: An estimate of His significance

Among the teachers of the Bhakti Schools of Vedānta, Rāmānuja holds a pre-eminent place for the following reasons: 1) His was the first thorough-going and decisive criticism of the Advaita of Śaṅkara characterised by an attributeless Brahman as the Supreme Reality and the doctrine of nescience which has no positive location or existence, though this protest had already been made partially by an earlier thinker Bhāskara, the propounder of the Bheda-bheda philosophy. 2) Ramanuja's system of thought was the store-house from which all the later Bhakti teachers drew liberally, making only some limited changes to suit their tradition of theology. 3) He was the first to propound a philosophy of theism in which God is the Absolute and the Absolute is God — in fact to obliterate the distinction between these two that Śaṅkara's Advaitism had projected. 4) He gave to Indian thought a God who includes everything in Himself but yet transcends the world of becoming, and who, according to his Śārīra-śārīri doctrine is the indweller of the cosmos as a whole and of every bit of it. 5) His theology presents God as transcendent in nature and majesty, but at the same time easily accessible to those who want Him in truth. 6) The God we get in His doctrine is a being who has Truth, Knowledge, Bliss, Purity and Infinity as His inherent nature, who has Omniscience, Omnipotence, Lordship, Immutability, Splendour, Generosity, Compassion etc., as countless auspicious qualities; who is the great creator; who has a form that is archetypal and the quintessence of beauty and attractiveness; who has a Trans-Natural Realm of Spiritual Stuff where He is present always with constant

attendants and the liberated Jīvas; who bears the supreme Name of Nārayaṇa; and who, being the indweller of all beings including Deities, constitutes the only One who is worshipped and who can grant liberation from the trammels of Samsāra.

Srī Nimbārka:

I Life and Philosophy - Dvaitādvaita

A noted teacher of Bhakti-Vedānta, who came soon after Rāmānuja, was Nimbārka. According to G.R. Bhandarkar he died in 1162, some 25 years after the traditional date of Rāmānuja's passing. He is likely to have preceded Madhva too (1238-1317). It is most likely that he flourished a little later in the 12th century, as he has criticised Rāmānuja in some respects. He was born of Telugu parents, Jagannātha and Sarasvati. His name Nimbārka is said to be derived from the place of his birth, Nimbapur, which is identified with a place now known as Naidupattana in modern Bellary District. Certain legendary traditions however interpret his name in another way, giving it a miraculous turn. It seems he was originally named Niyamānanda. He invited an ascetic to take his Bikṣa (food) at his house one day. It was very late, almost dusk, when the meal was ready, and so the ascetic would not partake of it, as it was against the practice of his sect to take food after sunset. Niyamānanda therefore prayed to the Lord for help in this difficult situation, and the Lord responded by placing His radiant discus known as Sudarśana on the western horizon. The discus shone there like the sun, and the ascetic was shown this sun-like brilliance from the top of a Nimba tree. Thinking that the brilliance was of the real sun, the ascetic took his meal after this. On knowing that this was really a miraculous happening, he gave to Niyamānanda the new name of Nimbārka for having shown the sun (Arka) from the top of a Nimba tree. Nimbārka was a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, and he spent his time mostly in Mathura the birth place of Kṛṣṇā. Nothing more is known about his life.

Like all Acāryas who preceded him, he also tried to present his theology on the basis of the Brahma Sūtras and the Bhagavad Gītā. But unlike the great commentaries on Brahma Sūtras, his is brief, and for that reason, very clear and free from the usually accepted dialectical method of stating the doctrine of the opposing schools as *prima facie* view (Pūrvapakṣa), followed by its refutation and statement of one's own doctrine (Siddhānta). He has also written a small work of ten verses known as Daśa-ślokī, giving a short exposition of his doctrine for beginners. He is supposed to have written a commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā, but it is not extant now. He had many disciples who wrote several works on his teachings. The most famous of these writers was Keśava Kāśmīri who, among several other works, wrote commentaries on the Brahma Sūtras and the Bhagavad Gītā.

II Bhedābheda of Bhāskara

The doctrine expounded by Nimbārka is known as Dvaitādvaita — duality in unity. It is not anything entirely new. What Nimbārka has done was mainly to adapt the Bhedābheda doctrine of Bhāskara to the Vaiṣṇava theology. In the Brahma Sūtras we get two teachers standing for two variations of this doctrine. Audulomi thinks that the Jīva is different from Brahman in the state of ignorance, but becomes one with Him in liberation, as a river becomes one with the ocean on joining it. Aśmaratya is of the view that Brahman and the Jīva are related as cause and effect. Later, more elaborate expositions of this trend of thought, with variations of their own, were made by Bhartṛprapañca and Yādava-prakāśa. Their original writings are not available now. The most original and profound exposition of the doctrine was made in the classical period of Indian philosophy by Bhāskara under the name Bhedābheda (difference-in-non-difference). Though he has also written a commentary on the Brahma Sūtras expounding this

doctrine, his is a forgotten system in Indian philosophy. This is mainly because he did not affiliate himself with any theistic cults and remained at a philosophical level like the Sāṃkhyas. And like the Sāṃkhyas he has no followers today, and even in philosophy texts, he is seldom dealt with, though he deserves a place among the great philosophers of India. It is on the lines chalked out by him that all the Non-Śaṅkarite systems of thought came into existence and trailed their metaphysical path, no doubt with great variations to suit their strong theistic bent. Nimbārka is one of those, and the very name of the system Dvaitādvaita (duality in unity) is only a synonym of Bhedābheda (difference-in-non-difference)

Owing to their close affinity, a brief consideration of Bhāskara's doctrine will be relevant in the study of Nimbārka's system. Bhāskara is a strict Vedāntin in the sense that he takes his stand on the Upaniṣads and Brahma Sūtras. The Upaniṣads have many passages which speak of the Supreme Being as one without a second and without any attributes. They have also an equally large number of passages which describe Him as possessed of countless glorious attributes and as different from the Prakṛti (Primordial Nature) and Jīvas. Bhāskara contends that Śaṅkara's Advaita takes the former types of passages literally, while the direct meanings of the latter type, which lean towards duality and attributefulness, are distorted. They are figuratively made to support the commentator's view. Such text-torturing is illegitimate. The direct meanings of passages should always be adhered to. To support the theory of attributeless non-duality, the Advaitin brings in the doctrine of Māyā and the theory of two tiers of Reality (the really real and the apparently real), known technically as Pāramārtha and Vyāvahāra. All these find no place in the Upaniṣads and are taken from Śūnyavāda Buddhism and given a Vedic camouflage. Such is Bhāskara's main criticism of Śaṅkara's interpretation of Vedānta.

So interpreting the Upaniṣadic passages according to their direct meaning, Bhāskara presents a Brahman who has innumerable auspicious attributes but without any particular form. Brahman, according to him, transforms Himself into the world of duality and change, without however losing His entity as the Absolute and Unitary Being. It is to explain this that the Advaitins bring in the theory of Māyā and apparent transformation. But Bhāskara rejects these as not only unsupported by the Vedas, but also as introducing more confusion than clarification. On the other hand, he maintains that Brahman has infinite power by virtue of which He can transform Himself in a real sense without losing His entity. If you deny this power, Brahman is reduced to a material substance to which alone is applicable the rule that real transformation destroys the original substance. The Jīva in his real nature is one with Brahman, but gets differentiated from Him in the state of bondage by what is called the Upādhis or Adjuncts of body-mind. It is like the one all-pervading atmosphere of which portions are limited by pots. Now what the ontological status of this Upādhi is, is not very clear. It must have necessarily its source in the Primordial Nature, which Brahman projects out of Himself by His mysterious power. Because of this limitation of Upādhi, the Jīva is different from Brahman, while he is in bondage, but in liberation he becomes one with Brahman, as a river becomes one with ocean when it enters it. Because in bondage the Jīva takes the nature of Bheda (differentiation) from Brahman but becomes non-different (Abheda) from Him in liberation, the system styles itself as Bhedābheda (difference-in-non-difference).

Now a marked difference of Bhāskara's system from Bhakti-Vedānta is that though his Supreme Being (God) is the same as the Absolute, and though that Being is endowed with all auspicious attributes, He is not a Person, and there is no place in the system for adoration, praise and worship, nor for that most important factor in the disciplines of all

schools of Bhakti-Vedānta — Divine Grace. According to Bhāskara, by the performance of the duties imposed on one by the Vedas without any desire for their fruits, and the practice of meditation on Brahman and the Jīva's oneness with Him, the Jīva will be able, by the strength of his aspiration for freedom, to release himself from the bondage imposed by Upādhis. His system therefore does not preach devotion to any form of the Deity, nor does it affiliate itself with any personalistic cult. So though his conception of Brahman is attributeful and his system realistic in rejecting the Avidyā-Māyā doctrine and in conceding reality to bondage and liberation, it has no place in Bhakti-Vedānta.

III Metaphysics of Nimbārka

Still in an account of the development of thought, it deserves a place in the Bhakti-Vedānta philosophy, because much of his metaphysics is accepted by the school under consideration here, namely the Dvaitādvaita system of Nimbārka. The very name Dvaitādvaita (duality in unity) is synonymous with Bhedābheda (difference-in-identity). Like all Vedāntins, Nimbārka holds that Brahman is the only ultimate existence, but He manifests Himself as the manifold world of becoming consisting of the Jīvas and the Jagat. They exist in Him and are sustained by His Prabhāva (unique power). To the question how the existence of this diversity can be reconciled with His being the One Unitary Being, the answer is that all contradictions which worldly logic poses, are resolved in His spiritual being. What are called contradictions can co-exist in Him in harmony unlike in this limited world of ours that is bound by laws of time, space and causation. He also gives the following statement of this doctrine of co-existence of non-difference and difference in non-mystical language. Brahman is non-different from the world and souls because these depend on Him for their being or their very existence, but He is different from them as He is self-dependent and possesses the unique qualities

of omniscience, omnipotence and the like, which the latter do not possess. The difference of the Jīvas and the universe from Brahman is thus natural. Yet they are one with Him in so far as they are His projections and cannot exist apart from Him. This is only another version of Rāmānuja's 'Apr̥thak-siddhi' or inseparable and non-reciprocal dependence.

Brahman is therefore the material and efficient cause of the world. To the question how the creator can also be the created, the answer given is: He, the omniscient and omnipotent, modifies Himself into the form of the world by the projection of His power or Prabhāva. The unconscious Prakṛti of the Sāmkhyas is not the material cause of the world. Brahman is both the material and efficient cause of the world, and His being so, is one of His essential attributes, just like Truth, Knowledge etc. In manifesting as the world of many His essence is not in any way affected, as it is His Power that expands itself in the state of creation and contracts in that of dissolution.

In his theory about the relation between the One and the many, Nimbārka differs from Rāmānuja in one important respect. To describe the universe and Jīvas as an attribute (Viśeṣaṇa) of God is not acceptable to Nimbārka, because an implication of calling anything an attribute is that it differentiates its possessor from something else. Now as there is no entity other than Brahman, who includes all that exists, He cannot be distinguished from another by any attribute. He has no objection to the description of Brahman as Śarīrī (soul) and the world as Śarīra (body). But he holds that it is better to say that there is both difference and non-difference in Brahman, and describe Vedānta as Dvaitādvaita and not as Viśiṣṭādvaita.

Another criticism is that soul and matter are substances, and to call substances as attributes is wrong. Further we get a knowledge of a thing through its attributes. So if the

Jīvas and the world are the attributes of God, they must give us an understanding of that substance which they qualify, namely God. But these give us no experience of God. Again God is said to have all auspicious qualities as attributes, besides the attribute of this imperfect and sinful world and the Jīvas. This is contradictory in a perfect God. For all these reasons Rāmānuja's theory of the world and the Jīvas being related as Viśeṣas or attributes to a God who is their Viśeṣya or the object qualified, is rejected by Nimbārka. For such reasons Nimbārka would not describe his system as Viśiṣṭādvaita, but as Dvaitādvaita (diversity in unity) only.

IV Brahman

According to Nimbārka Reality is of two orders: Independent (Svatantra) and Dependent (Paratantra). The only independent entity is God or Brahman. Dependent existences are of two kinds, conscious and non-conscious. The Jīva is the only conscious entity other than the independent entity of Brahman. Non-conscious entities are three — Aprākṛta or Supra-natural Stuff, Kāla or Time, and Prakṛti or Primordial Nature.

God is known by several names as Paramātmān, Bhagavān, Īśvara, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and Puruṣottama. Unlike other entities He is free from the five kinds of imperfections (Kleśas) — ignorance, egoism, attachment, hatred and fear of death. He is omniscient and omnipotent and His will is always accomplished (Satya-saṅkalpa). He is the only Being free from the law of Karma. He is Nirguṇa (without Guṇas) in the sense that the Guṇas of Prakṛti — Sattva, Rajas and Tamas — have no sway over Him. But He is the substrate of all auspicious Guṇas or qualities. He is the great Creator and the only Redeemer, and none but He can lift the Jīva from the trammels of Samsāra and give him liberation.

He possesses the six unique qualities manifest in His creative work. These are: 1) Jñāna or Knowledge through which he can perceive every thing of every place and of all time; 2) Śakti or power by which He can make even the impossible possible; 3) Bala or strength with which He supports the whole universe; 4) Aiśvarya or Lordliness by which He controls everything; 5) Vīrya or Energy which makes Him tireless under any circumstance; and 6) Tejas or Prowess by which He can suppress any opposing force and can Himself remain never suppressed.

There seems to be no clear-cut distinction between the Svarūpa and Svabhāva of Īśvara, as in Rāmānuja's system, in which all the above powers and many others are included in the Svabhāva i.e. in Īśvara's relation with other beings. In general Nimbārka's system recognises Īśvara as the Substrate of all auspicious attributes, of which man can grasp only a few. He has an eternal form made of eternal self-manifest Bliss, which has knowledge, bliss and infinitude as its essential qualities, and which is the embodiment of supreme beauty, youthfulness, sweetness, charm, fragrance and softness that cause thrills on contact. Though all these are non-different from Him, their substrate, yet they are not identical with Him. There is both difference and non-difference between Him and His attributes.

The eternal form of God is Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of Love, and Rādhā the Power of Love. They are inseparable from each other. God, having the eternal form of Rādhā-kṛṣṇa, has a heavenly Abode beyond the limit of Prakṛti or material Nature. That Abode is Vaikuṇṭha which is made of the stuff of Aprākṛta-Sattva (the same as Rāmānuja's Suddha-sattva), which is of the nature of self-luminous divine effulgence. While all-pervading, the Lord is specially present in this eternal Divine Abode, served by His eternally liberated attendants like Viśvaksena, Jaya, Vijaya etc. Garuḍa is His mount, and Ādi-śeṣa, His seat. His weapons consist of Śaṅkha (conch shell), Sudarśana

Cakra (discus) and Sāraṅga (bow made of horn), while his musical instruments include a lute and a horn. He is decorated with a Kīrīṭa (crown), ear-rings, Kausthuba Jewel, ring, yellow garment and Vanamāla (garland of choice flowers and Tulasi). All these are constituted of Aprākṛta-Sattva (luminous non-material stuff).

Manifestations of Brahman

While this is His Archetypal form on which devotees are required to meditate, He has several other forms in His creative manifestation. These are the Vyūhas and the Avatāras. The former are emanations meant to regulate the various stages of creation as also for meditative purposes. The Vyūhas are four—Vāsudeva, Saṅkaraṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha. Vāsudeva is the Supreme Lord Himself and is in that aspect known also as Kṣetrajña. Saṅkaraṣaṇa is the Antar-yāmin, manifest in all as the Individual Self. Pradyumna is the Manas (mind) of all beings. Aniruddha is the controller of cause and effect, and from him is manifest the entire universe, animate and inanimate.

For the protection of Dharma and blessing of devotees, He manifests Himself as Avatāras or Incarnations. When He thus incarnates, even if all His potencies (Śaktis) are not manifest, He is still in His Svarūpa (divine status). There are three types of incarnations: 1) Guṇāvatāras are His manifestations assuming one or the other of the three Guṇas of Prakṛti—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas—for creation, preservation and dissolution of the manifested universe. These Guṇāvatāras are known as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra. 2) Puruṣāvatāra is the manifestation for controlling the evolution of Prakṛti and rests in Causal Waters (Kāraṇārṇava). 3) Līlāvatāras have several variations. Of these, in Āveśāvatāra the Lord's own self uses a psycho-physical organism having no Jīva to intervene. The example given of this, is the incarnation as Nara-Nārāyaṇa. In Śaktyamēśāvatāra the Lord infuses His potency into an

organism possessing a Jīva and manifests His power through him. Examples are Paraśurāma, Kapila, Sanatkumāra, Nārada, Vyāsa etc. Lastly there are Svarūpāvatāras in which the Lord manifests Himself in His Sat-cid-ānanda form. They are sub-divided into Amśarūpāvatāras in which though the Lord is fully present in the person of the organism, He manifests them only partially. The examples of this are incarnations as Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Vāmana etc. The other is Pūrṇāvatāras in which all the qualities and powers of the Lord are expressed. Such full incarnations are only of Nṛsimha, Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Thus for Nimbārka God is essentially formful and the substrate of all auspicious attributes. When the Upaniṣads speak of Him as 'Nirguṇa', it means only that He is not subject to the Guṇas or Prakṛti. So also 'Nirviśeṣa' (without attributes) means He is without attributes born of nescience as in the case of worldly objects to whom those attributes are limitations. His form and auspicious attributes do not impair His all-pervasiveness, just as the sun's form as a disc does not prevent His all-pervasiveness by His light. So also when the scriptures speak of Him as beyond thought, it does not mean that He is an unknown and unknowable entity. It means that He is not known by the senses and the mind like worldly objects. But to a mind purified by devotion and austerity, He reveals His unique form.

V Jīva

Description of the Jīva

In the Dvaitādvaita doctrine of Nimbārka the Jīva is both different from and identical with Brahman. In the first place, the Upaniṣads are replete with passages which speak of the Jīva as different from Brahman, and these passages are not to be explained away. If the Jīva were absolutely identical with Brahman, then by creating this universe which

is full of all kinds of sufferings, the Paramātman would be guilty of doing wrong to Himself. The Jīva is the doer of good and bad deeds and he experiences the three kinds of pain resulting from past deeds. At the same time, several Upaniṣadic texts assert the identity of Brahman and Jīva. By identity here we have to understand that the existence and activities of the individual self are all dependent on the Lord.

There are several theories about the Jīvas in the Bhedābheda way of thinking. According to Bhāskara, the Jīva is one with Brahman when freed from the Upādhi or adjunct limiting him. When the Upādhi is overcome in liberation, the Jīva becomes one with Brahman. Audulomi holds that the soul is different in bondage but becomes one with Brahman in liberation, as the water of the river becomes one with the ocean when it joins the latter. According to Aśmarathya, even in bondage the soul is different and non-different from Brahman as a ray of light is from the sun. Kāśakṛtsna is of the view that Brahman residing in the heart is the controller, and the soul is the controlled.

Amidst these different conceptions, Nimbārka's Dvaitādvaita doctrine holds that the Jīva is a part of the qualified and determinate being of God to whom it is subordinate and attributive in a primary sense. The Jīva is different from Him, since he is created, subject to nescience, and dependent and controlled by Him. Since the Jīva is inseparable from God as the sun's rays from the sun; since he is pervaded and controlled by Him; since he subsists in Him; and since he shares His nature, the Jīva is also non-different from Him. As the Upaniṣads contain passages which speak of the Jīva in this way, all these passages have to be interpreted literally, and this is possible only in a doctrine like Dvaitādvaita.

Nimbārka describes the Jīva thus: He is neither born, nor dies. He is eternal and is self-conscious as the 'I'. He

is a knower and actor. He abides in the heart, but pervades the whole body and derives experiences through it. The self is of the nature of consciousness (Jñāna-svarūpa); consciousness is also His attribute. Thus consciousness is both the substrate and the attribute of the Jīva. He is a free agent, but that freedom is subject to the will of Īśvara. To the question whether this will not restrict the freedom of the Jīva, the answer given is that God impels him to do actions or abstain from them according to the tendencies and merits and demerits acquired by the Jīva by his past actions. Knowledge or consciousness is not an accidental quality of the self, but constitutes his essence. The sense of 'I' characterising the Jīva and constituting his essence is an ontological reality. But nescience, Avidyā, has conjoined it with the body-mind provided by Prakṛti. The Jīva however can regain his nature as the spiritual 'I' when nescience is liquidated by the grace of God. Nescience or Avidyā in this system, as in that of Rāmānuja, is the accumulating load of Karma and not a special category described in the Advaita system as neither existent nor non-existent. Though atomic, the Jīva pervades by his attributive knowledge, which is capable of expansion like the light of a lamp or the brilliance of a gem. But beginningless nescience hides his real nature from him, and only by devotion to God and by obtaining His grace can the Jīva regain his real nature. The Jīva has to be described as atomic not in the sense of its dimension but to show that he is a monad with a self-identity. Unless this is accepted there is no way of understanding his passing from one body to another. The Jīva, however, is an Amśa, a potency, of Īśvara, and so he retains his essential nature, though it is obscured by Avidyā constituted of beginningless Karma while he is in the state of bondage. When liberated, he realizes himself in his true relationship with the Lord.

Kinds of Jīvas

Though all Jīvas are potencies of Brahman, Nimbārka's system recognizes a kind of Tāratamya, gradation, among them. Some of them are Nityamuktas or eternally free. They had never been in bondage. They are eternally engaged in Divine service as His ornaments and other paraphernalia like His crest (Kirīṭa), ear-ring, (Kuṇḍala), flute etc., and as His attendants like Ādiśeṣa, Viṣvaksena, Garuḍa, Sudarśana, etc. Next, there are Jīvas who are Muktas. They are those who have been liberated by the Lord's grace. Some of them seek the bliss of serving Him, while others are satisfied with their intrinsic bliss as Ātman. Then there are bound souls, Baddhas. Some of them are Mumukṣus or seekers after liberation striving for that consummation. There are also some others oblivious to spiritual values and are wallowing in worldliness. These are Nitya-baddhas, the eternally bound.

The Jīvas are bound to Samsāra or cycle of births and deaths by Avidyā (nescience), which in Nimbārka's system, as in Rāmānuja's, is the load of beginningless Karma. In the case of Nitya-baddhas or eternally bound worldlings, they are by nature only prone to do evil and have no inclination for devotion or spiritual values and are without any ethical standard in life. They are subject to what the Gītā describes as Āsuric or demoniac nature, and to them are open the three gateways to Naraka (purgatory) — sexuality, anger, and greed. The conceit of 'I' and 'mine', indulgence in activities arising from fraudulence, cruelty, greed, pride etc., resorting to evil company — these are the characteristics of such Jīvas. Having lost the opportunity for higher evolution possible in human birth, they suffer for their extremely heinous acts in purgatories in Yamaloka, then come back to this world, and get embodiments in animal bodies or among the most undeveloped species of mankind.

Liberation of the Jīvas

As for Mumukṣus, i.e. those who accept spiritual values and are striving for liberation from Samsāra, they evolve to higher levels of spiritual development through several births on earth and in heavens according to their Karma until the Lord's grace releases them. Two paths are spoken of as the ways by which the Jīvas depart to their higher destiny.

Those who have done good deeds but are not yet eligible for release go by what is called the Dhūmādi-mārga, the Path of Smoke. Several deities, who are guardians of the spheres on the way, take the Jīvas to the Lunar Sphere where they enjoy the fruits of their good deeds. But on the exhaustion of these, they have to come back to the world for acquiring further merits or attaining higher evolution. The Jīvas who have attained Bhakti and are eligible for liberation through the Lord's grace, go by the Arcirādi-mārga, the Path of Light. They go clothed in the subtle body, which the gross body has been sheathing till the fall of the latter at death. Clothed in the subtle body the Jīva reaches Brahmaloḥa, passing through eleven regions — the Day, the Bright Half of the Month, the Summer Solstice, Year, Vāyuloka, Ādityaloka, Candraloka, Vidyuloka, Varuṇaloka and Prajāpatiloka. Of these, the first nine mentioned are not exactly regions but Ativāhakas or those who are engaged by the Lord to convey the Jīva from region to region, while the last two are helpers. From the Prajāpatiloka the Jīva penetrates through the Material Boundary (Prākṛta-maṇḍala) and enters the precincts of the Parama-dhāma, the Supreme Abode. There the Jīva casts off his subtle body and meets Heavenly Beings who carry him beyond that region. Then the Jīva reaches the Viṣṇuloka where he gets a body that is not material (Aprākṛta). He now becomes aware of the Lord Puruṣottama, the Supreme Being, with all His attendants standing before Him with folded hands — the Lord who is the cause of the universe,

who is all consciousness-bliss, free from all blemishes and possessing all powers and auspicious qualities. The Jīva realizes that he is a sharer of the nature of the Lord in spite of his inherent difference from Him as a monad, and never returns to this world of life and death. Only then is he liberated from all Karma and attains Mukti.

Thus in Nimbārka's system there is no Jīvan-mukti or liberation while living. Mukti is attained only after the Prārabdha Karma is exhausted on the death of the present body. Mukti does not mean the dissolution of the individual nature of the Jīvas as a river does when it joins the sea. Like the substances and attribute, or the sun and his rays, a distinction without an absolute difference persists. In other words what the Jīva realizes in liberation is 'non-difference in difference' with the Paramātmān.

VI Non-conscious Entities

Aprākṛta

There are three non-conscious entities — Aprākṛta, Kāla (time) and Prakṛti (Material Nature). Of these, Aprākṛta may be described as a non-material, spiritual stuff, into whose make the three Guṇas of Prakṛti [Sattva, Rajas and Tamas] do not enter. It is more or less the same as Śuddha-sattva of Rāmānuja's doctrine. It is of the nature of light and of non-obstruction. It is called by several names as Nitya-vibhūti, Parama-vyoma, Parama-pada, Viṣṇu-pada etc. It is so lustrous that even the gods cannot look at it. According to the will of the Lord, it assumes several shapes for the experience of the Lord and of liberated Jīvas. The bodies of liberated beings, the Abode of the Lord, the various objects experienced there etc., are all made of this non-material stuff. Time has no sway over it.

Kāla [time]

Kāla is different from Aprākṛta and from Prakṛti. It is without beginning or end, and all cognitions are within

its influence. Notions like past, future, present, late, soon etc., are all due to time. It is the Lord's instrument of creation, sustentation and dissolution, and is also the material cause of our notions of time from a Paramāṇu to the immense period of the life-span of the creator Brahmā. The lowest measure of time, Paramāṇu [atomic time] is the time required for the sun to cross the space occupied by a Paramāṇu [material atom]. From this onward time is divided into fifteen divisions according to the movement of the sun. The fifteenth is what human beings call one year, which is equal to a day and night for the gods. Three hundred and sixty such divine days make one divine year. Twelve thousand divine years constitute the four Yugas (Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali). This entire period is one cycle and one thousand such cycles constitute one day of the Creator or four-faced Brahmā. During this single day of Brahmā fourteen Manus appear one after another, seventy one Yugas being the period of one Manu. Fourteen days, calculated as above, constitute one day of Brahmā, and an equal period following, his night. One hundred years calculated thus is the span of the life of a Brahmā. Each half of that time is called one Parārdha. In the life of the current Brahmā, the first Parārdha is over and the second Parārdha is on. It is called Śveta-varāha-kalpa.

Thus everything produced out of primordial matter [Prakṛti] depends on Time which is under the control of the supreme Puruṣottama. It does not dissolve at Pralaya, like Prakṛti. By nature Time is divisionless, and in the actual experience of it, it has divisions which are basically derived from the movement of the sun.

Prakṛti [primordial matter]

Prakṛti is the stuff of which this changeful universe and the body-mind of beings living in it are made. It is known also by various other names such as Māyā, Pradhāna, Tamas, Avyakta, Śakti etc. As in the Sāṃkhya, it is

constituted of three substance-attributes [Guṇas] of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, but unlike in the Sāṃkhya, Prakṛti is not an independent and inherently dynamic substance. It is absolutely dependent on the Lord and is the material for His cosmic play. It is He alone that energises and makes it dynamic by His will in order to facilitate the evolution of the Jīvas towards their real nature. Like all other entities in Nimbārka's doctrine, Prakṛti too is both identical and different from the Supreme Being. Like the Jīva it is also a potency (Prabhāva) of the Lord. The name Māyā applied to it should not mislead one to think that it has anything to do with the Avidyā-Māyā concept in Śaṅkara's Advaita philosophy. Prakṛti is an absolute ontological fact. It is changeful, but that will not make it unreal. It is one with the Lord in so far as it is His potency and is absolutely dependent on Him. At the same time it is different from Him in so far as it is an emanation from Him, like the cobweb from the spider. Its changes do not in the least affect the entity of the Lord. Parīṇāma or change is real, but it does not cause the decay or destruction of its substratum, the Lord, because the Lord is self-dependent and endowed with the inconceivable power of making even the impossible possible. He can therefore be both the material and the instrumental cause of the universe.

The changes of Prakṛti take place as two types of movement — Sṛṣṭi or projection, and Pralaya or dissolution into the causal state. There is no first beginning for Prakṛti and its movements, as it is as eternal as the Lord Himself, being His eternal sportive manifestation or overflow of His bliss. By His will the three constituents of Prakṛti — Sattva, Rajas and Tamas — lose their balanced state and by their mutual combinations produce one by one all the categories of creation. The categories and the process of this manifestation are more or less as in the Sāṃkhya, with this great difference that it is the will of the Lord that activates and directs this evolutionary movement of Prakṛti.

Nimbārka accepts the Sat-kārya-vāda i.e. that the effect is not a new product, but is already contained in the cause. The effect is therefore only an unfoldment. In Pralaya it is withdrawn into the causal state and is indistinguishable from its substratum, the Lord, and in Sṛṣṭi, He unfolds and projects the same into manifested state, so that the Jīvas may get body-minds and abodes for the fructification of their Karma potencies and gradually attain spiritual evolution.

The vibhūti or unthinkable might and glory of the Lord will impress a mind when one thinks of the countless Brahmāṇḍas (Cosmic Shells) floating in His creative will like particles in a beam of light. The earth that we inhabit may be taken as the centre of a Brahmāṇḍa. Below the earth (Bhū) are the seven nether worlds — Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Rasātala, Talātala, Mahātala and Pātāla. Covering that is pitch darkness surrounded by the Aṇḍakaṭāha (the shell of the Egg-like Cosmos). Above the Bhū-loka are the six more worlds of increasing spiritual splendour. These are Bhuvārloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka and Satyaloka. Covering that is a belt of darkness surrounding the upper part of the Aṇḍa-kaṭāha. All this together extends over millions of Yojanas [a distance unit of several miles]. The number of such Brahmāṇḍas floating in the Divine will are countless like sparks seen in a beam of light. A description of the Cosmos in this way may look fanciful to a modern mind, but a little thought will show that it is the only way of impressing a gross mind with a sense of the Divine Māhātmya [majesty].

VII Spiritual Striving and Liberation

God is the ultimate cause of bondage and liberation. Bondage of the Jīva is caused by Avidyā [nescience], which is the same as the beginningless load of Karma consisting of merits and demerits. It is by His will that this Karma becomes operative. Avidyā makes the Jīva forget his real

individuality as a Potency of *Īśvara* and feel that he is independent, and entrenches him in the false ego generated thereby through identification with the body-mind, the products of *Prakṛti*. The *Jīva* performs actions with the sense of independence that this pseudo-ego gives, only to fall into utter misery. Lack of faith in the scriptures and the Teacher, pride, absence of sympathy for others, excessive lust and greed promoted by evil company — all these obstruct spiritual development. Holy company is the most important factor in turning the *Jīva* Godward. Dispassion is needed if the *Jīva* is to move away from worldliness. There are two kinds of dispassion. One is caused by sufferings, bereavements, loss, disease etc. In some cases the dispassion thus generated may be temporary, but in some fortunate souls, its effect may result in a permanent turn. The second kind of dispassion is caused by the grace of God. By His grace one may have that rarest of experiences, namely holy company, which can give an entirely new direction to the tendencies of the *Jīva* in spite of the pull of *Karmas*.

Jñāna Yoga

There are two paths to liberation. One of them is *Jñāna Yoga*, the path of knowledge, in which meditation forms the important factor. It is meant for those who have knowledge of the *Vedas* and the power of meditation. It consists in the practice of hearing the Truth as revealed in the *Upaniṣads* and reflecting and meditating on it for the immediate experience of Brahman through His grace. Brahman should be meditated on as the Supreme Self ensouling oneself and as one's Source and Inner Controller. Meditation should be regularly practised till death.

The aspirant should meditate on his inner self as part of Brahman both different and non-different from Him and as inseparable from Him. This is the real nature of the self. The experience of this real nature of the self is

different from that of the self of his ignorance, which is body-based. When meditation matures, supreme devotion in the form of constant recollection of Brahman dawns on the self. In the state of ignorance the attributive knowledge of the Jīva is in a shrunken state due to the load of Karma adhering to the Jīva. When by the Lord's grace the Jīva's identification with Prakṛti is destroyed, the Jīva develops its intrinsic knowledge as both one and different from Brahman. This is the state of liberation. It will be seen from this that liberation is not a new accomplishment but a recognition of one's real nature. It is thus not a product of action and cannot be non-eternal like all attainments that are the products of action.

Bhakti Yoga

The path of liberation is open also to those who have no Upaniṣadic learning. They can attain it through the path of Bhakti or devotion. Bhakti means the service of God with body, speech and mind. An aspirant for devotion must make God the supreme end of life without any condition or desire for fruits of actions. Bhakti ends in complete self-surrender which generates knowledge by the grace of God.

The practice of Bhakti is divided into two levels — the preparatory and the final phase. The injunctions for the practice of Bhakti are given by the Upaniṣads and the Purāṇas. The performance of one's duties without any personal desire and as an offering to God is the principal part of preparatory Bhakti. Worship of the Divine images, visit to holy places, study of devotional literature, repetition of the Divine Name, participation in Bhajans and, above all, association with holy men, are some of the means for helping the growth of the infant plant of devotion. The end-phase of devotion is the passionate and undeviating love of God. In the case of one who has attained this state, the mind naturally and effortlessly engages itself with the

qualities and forms of the Divine. There is uninterrupted recollection and absorption, and it brings the knowledge of the spiritual nature of the self and its relation with the Divine.

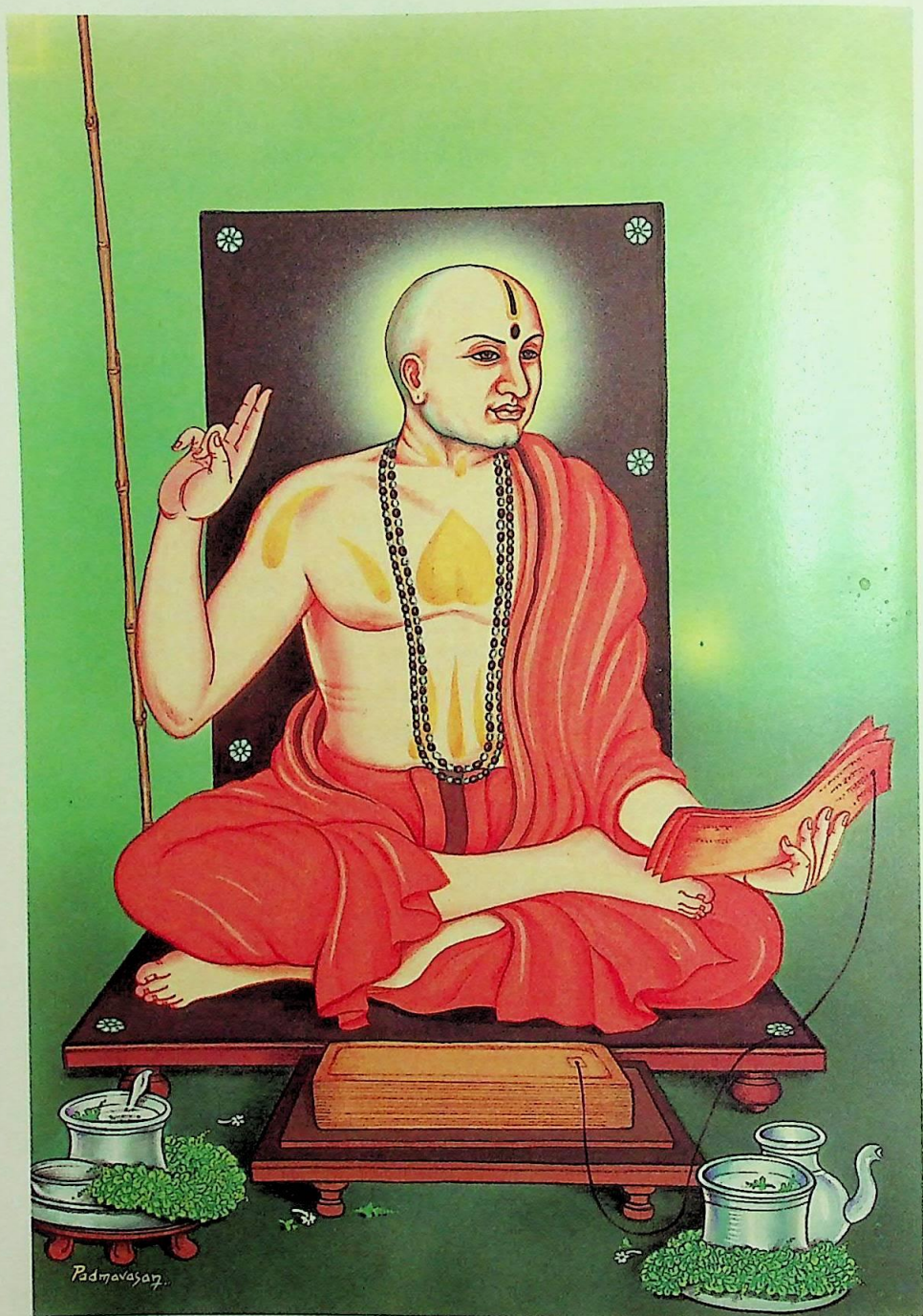
An important part of the practice of devotion is self-surrender or what is known in Rāmānuja's system as Prapatti. Dedication of oneself, along with one's dependents and belongings, to God is the central feature of self-surrender. It evokes God's grace and leads the aspirant to the Supreme Status. Abandonment of religious rites and taking refuge in Him leads to transcendent purity and freedom from all sins. Self-surrender is analysed into six phases: (1) Resolve to cherish love for all, as all animate and inanimate beings constitute His body. (2) Abstaining from hostility to Him. It means abandonment of all evil ways and enmity to others. For, indulgence in these are really offences against Him. (3) Faith. It is the strong conviction that God, the refuge of all, will protect the devotee. Seeking His protection means maintenance of an attitude of prayerfulness for it. (4) Choosing Him as one's shelter (5) Entrusting oneself, one's near and dear ones, possession etc., to Him and throwing one's burdens, one's 'I and mine', on Him. (6) Humbleness. It consists in absence of pride and the conceit of agency and the readiness to submit unperturbed to any misfortune or failure, accepting it as the Divine will. All who have these requirements can adopt the path of resignation. It is the central part of Bhakti.

Liberation or emancipation

The attainment of emancipation, Mokṣa, is the end of all spiritual striving. It consists in liberation from the oppressive hold of Karma and attainment of the nature of God, of whom one is a part or potency. It is called Sāyujya. Sāyujya does not mean the merging of the self in God, as some think, but having uninterrupted experience of His nature and attributes, and attaining of a fraction of His

qualities. The Jīva is always a part of His, both different and non-different, and he never ceases to be that and be one with the whole. That the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman does not assert an absolute identity between both, but the attainment of one's real nature through continuous experience of Him as His part and as belonging to Him. In liberation there is no physical body, but there is a spiritual body constituted of non-material stuff (Aprākṛta) with which the Jīva participates in Divine activities. Two kinds of liberation are recognized — immediate and gradual. In immediate liberation the Jīva casts off his physical body born of Karma and attains his divine Status. Thus in Nimbārka's system there is no Jīvanmukti or liberation in the embodied state as in Śaṅkara's. When ignorance is gradually destroyed, gradual emancipation takes place.

Four types of liberation are recognized. These are proximity with God (Sāmīpya); similarity of form with Him (Sārūpya); residence in His Abode (Sālokya); and mergence in Him as His part without losing one's individual nature (Sāyujya). As a bird sitting on a tree or as a fish swimming in water, the Jīva is merged in the pervasiveness of God without losing his identity. Mergence is a particular kind of intimate relation with Him. In the state of bondage the Jīva does not understand that he is supported and controlled by God. Misery in repeated cycles of birth and death is the result. In liberation he realizes his absolute dependence on Him. Dependence on God is not a state of pain, bondage or degradation. It only gives bliss, as liberated Jīvas play about Him in ecstatic joy. His delight is equal to that of God, and he shares all power except that of creation. Some released souls may assume bodies prompted by the will of the Lord and the desire to serve Him in His divine incarnations.



Śrī Madhvācārya: Life

Madhva's birth and upbringing

Our knowledge of Śrī Madhvācārya's life (1238-1317) is based on Madhvavijaya, a work in Sanskrit by Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita, which is held in great esteem both as a historical text and a sacred poetical work by the followers of this noted Ācārya. The work can be taken very largely as authentic in regard to the historical setting given in it, as it was produced by a contemporary soon after the demise of the Ācārya. Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍitācārya (1287-1350) was the son of Trivikrama Paṇḍita, originally a great Advaitic scholar, who later became a disciple of Madhva after a long debate with him. The Madhvavijaya is full of remarkable miracles, many of which are also narrated here, as they give us an idea of the great impact his life made on contemporaries.

The Indian mind always gives a divine origin to great spiritual teachers. Thus Śaṅkara is spoken of as an incarnation of Śiva, and Rāmānuja, of Ādiśeṣa the first of Viṣṇu's attendants. In the same strain, Madhva is given a divine origin. As the path of pure devotion to God had got contaminated after the advent of the Advaita philosophy of Śaṅkara, the Devas, i.e. the devotees, prayed to Viṣṇu to redeem the world from this hostile doctrine. As Viṣṇu would not take an incarnation in the Kali Yuga, he commissioned Mukhyaprāṇa, the first of his emanations (identified with his creative force, Hiranyagarbha) to undertake this work. Mukhyaprāṇa is also alluded to as Vāyu. It was Mukhyaprāṇa who had in earlier Yugas been

born as Hanumān, the attendant and Vibhūti of Rāma; and as Bhīmasena, celebrated in the Mahābhārata as the mightiest man and the destroyer of Asuras born as kings. Madhvācārya's divine affiliation is with this Mukhyaprāṇa, the first emanation of Mahāviṣṇu.

Śrī Madhva — known also by three other names, Vāsudeva, Pūrṇaprajña and Ānandatīrtha — is definitely known to have lived from 1238 to 1317 to the ripe old age of seventy nine. He was born in a Tulu Brāhmaṇa family inhabiting the village of Pājaka (or Pājakakṣetra), eight miles southeast of the town of Uḍupi in South Kanara district of Karnāṭaka. His father Madhyageha Bhaṭṭa (otherwise known as Naddantillaya) was a Paṇḍit specially learned in Itihāsas and Purāṇas. He, as also Acyutaprekṣa the Guru of Madhvācārya, were all probably Ekānta - Vaiṣṇavas, devoted to Viṣṇu and to the Pañcarātra texts. Though following a devotional doctrine, they were deeply influenced by the Advaita philosophy which had become the dominant doctrine among learned people all over India after Śaṅkara propounded it in a systematic way. The temple of Ananteśvara was the centre of devotional life in that region, and the Bhāgavata and the Mahābhārata, besides other Itihāsa, Purāṇa and Pañcarātra texts, were very popular there and studied devotedly even before Śrī Madhva's time.*

* Uḍupi was also known as Śivelli (or Rajatapuram, the Sanskritised form of it). At one time the chief temple there was that of Candramaulīśvara (Śiva). Another important temple was that of Ananteśvara, having a Śivaliṅgam on a pedestal of silver, popularly called Śiva-belli, the Silver-Śiva. The place name Śivelli must have originated from this. The Tulu speaking Brāhmaṇas of this place were worshippers of both Śiva and Viṣṇu. Ananteśvara temple is supposed to be a Viṣṇu temple, though the image is a Liṅgam. There were many temples with Śivaliṅgam, but in some of them the Liṅgam was considered Viṣṇu, as in Ananteśvara temple. Both Viṣṇu and Śiva Sahasranāmas were chanted in these temples. The deity in some temples was called Śaṅkaranārāyaṇa, and in some others Hari-Hara. Thus it was a place of fusion of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Advaita. Śrī Kṛṣṇa temple for which Uḍupi is now famous was established by Madhva.

Madhyageha Bhaṭṭa was childless, as his two sons passed away early in life. So with a view to have a son, he practised austerities and prayers at the temple of Ananteśvara for long, and by the Lord's grace he got a son, who became the great Ācārya. It was Mukhyaprāṇa who entered into the body of Madhyageha's wife and was delivered as a beautiful infant with large eyes and a moon-like face. The father named him Vāsudeva to indicate that he was born to give knowledge to the world and that he would ever be devoted to Lord Nārāyaṇa. Miraculous events occurred centering on Vāsudeva even from his infancy. Madhyageha Bhaṭṭa, the father, took the infant one day to the temple of Ananteśvara at Uḍupi and dedicated him to the Lord. His path lay through forests inhabited by man-eating wild animals, but having the divine boy in hand, the father could pass through these regions without any danger. Even when fed by mistake with well-baked horse gram, the infant's health was not in the least affected. When he was only one year old, he clung one day to the tail of a bull, and in that strange manner went through the bushy grazing grounds and jungles that the bull traversed. He satisfied a debtor of his father by giving him only some tamarind seeds, creating in him the feeling that, through the seeds, what was bestowed on him was the great consummation, Mokṣa. All people in the village were wonder-struck and happy at the presence of such a divine child in their midst.

After a few years, Vāsudeva, while yet a small boy, disappeared from the house. He went into a neighbouring forest. Though warned by travellers on the way about the dangers there, he proceeded and performed worship to Lord Nārāyaṇa in a temple in the forest of Kaduvor and stayed at another temple of Śiva at Bannaṅge. From there he went to Uḍupi and worshipped at the shrine of Ananteśvara. The distressed parents of the missing child found him out after much search and took him home. When questioned as to who protected him in all these dangerous regions, his reply was that it was Nārāyaṇa.

A little later, Madhyageha Bhaṭṭa initiated his son in the study of the alphabets. There was no need to teach him. The ocean of intelligence that he was, he knew the alphabets already. Going to the village of Neyampalli with his mother, Vāsudeva came across a Brāhmaṇa named Śiva narrating a Paurāṇika episode in a wrong way to a large audience. The boy corrected him, and gained the applause of the audience. He did the same kind of correction even when his own father was narrating a story from a Purāṇa.

At the age of eight he was invested with the sacred thread by his father with the commandment: 'Living a virtuous life, serve the Fire and the preceptor. Observing the vow of celibacy, study the Vedas well.' Put under the care of a preceptor, it was found that Vāsudeva mastered everything in no time. Study was like play to him. All Vedic learning showed itself in him like 'a ball in hand'. At the close of study-hours Vāsudeva always engaged himself in sports with his companions. He excelled all his companions in running, jumping, wrestling, water-sports etc. He was spending so much of his time in these manly physical exercises that the teacher got disgusted with him. He chided him one day and asked him why he was coming to the Gurukula at all, if his intention was to spend his time in play. Vāsudeva then replied that the Vedic chant that was practised there was not to his liking, and when asked to chant in his own way, he did accordingly. His pronunciation and Vedic intonation roused the admiration of the teacher as well as of all the learned men there. After a time he gave the usual Dakṣiṇā (parting-gift) to the preceptor and departed for his residence.

Madhva's Sannyāsa

At about the age of sixteen Vāsudeva, who was Mukhyaprāṇa incarnated to teach whole-hearted devotion to Śrī Hari, decided to enter the Order of Sannyāsins, as he felt that this was the best means to fulfil his life's mission. Near the modern town of Udipi, in the village of Kārey,

there was a monastery of which Acyutaprekṣa was the head. To what system of philosophy he was an adherent, is uncertain. It is said in the Madhvavijaya that his preceptor, before passing away, instructed him that the doctrines of the Ātman being one with Brahman and of the illusory nature of the world experience as preached by Māyāvāda were all devoid of truth, and exhorted him to adore Nārāyaṇa with all devotion. Since then Acyutaprekṣa had begun worshipping Ananteśvara at Uḍupi. One day Lord Ananteśvara revealed to him through an oracle that in future a great disciple would join him. Thus was Vāsudeva's arrival announced to Acyutaprekṣa. The parents of Vāsudeva, especially his mother, could not at first reconcile themselves to the idea of losing their only surviving son to asceticism. But they yielded after some time when another boy was born to them, and when Vāsudeva threatened that, if even after that, they stood in his way of becoming a Sannyāsin, he would leave his native land and be lost in the wide world for ever. Afterwards he was initiated into Sannyāsa by Acyutaprekṣa under the name, Pūrṇaprajña. Soon after, Pūrṇaprajña expressed a desire to go to the Gaṅgā for a holy bath. In response to the earnest prayers of Acyutaprekṣa to Lord Ananteśvara, Mother Gaṅgā came gurgling up in their Math's pond for all to bathe in her holy waters. This helped to retain Pūrṇaprajña at the Math itself for the time being.

Under Acyutaprekṣa the new ascetic began to receive instruction in the doctrines of Advaita Vedānta in which Acyutaprekṣa seems to have been proficient. But difference of views on fundamental teachings between the Guru and the disciple began to crop up soon, especially when Iṣṭasiddhi was being expounded. Later, when the Bhāgavata recitals were taking place, Pūrṇaprajña amended the readings of passages that were recited. On scrutinizing several texts, it was found that Pūrṇaprajña was correct. The astonished Acyutaprekṣa asked him how he could know

the whole Bhāgavata so thoroughly. The pupil replied that he had known all that in his previous births. In recognition of the learning and divine inspiration of Pūrṇaprajña, he was now given the new name of Ānandatīrtha. Madhva, the name by which he is generally known, is only a synonym of his real name. It is also said that Acyutaprekṣa, impressed by his untaught learning and powers of exposition, made him the Head of that Math.

For some years from now, Ānandatīrtha spent his time in confronting arrogant scholars who came to challenge him. Most of them might have been scholars of Buddhistic, Jain and Advaitic persuasions. The first of these were Buddhisāgara and Vādasimha who, being defeated in debate, had to bolt away at night unknown to any. In all his debates with scholars, Ānandatīrtha was criticizing and refuting the popular interpretation by Śaṅkara of Bādarāyaṇa's Vedānta Sūtras, a basic text of Vedānta. So he was asked by scholars, as also by his teacher Acyutaprekṣa, to produce another commentary that could equal or excel Śaṅkara's. He replied that he would bide his time.

First South Indian Pilgrimage

Recognition in the neighbourhoods of Uḍupi encouraged him to emerge into the wider world. He first undertook a tour up to Kanyākumārī, accompanied by Acyutaprekṣa. At the first place of halt, Viṣṇumaṅgala, he was put to test by Brāhmaṇas of rival schools. They gave him heaps of banana fruits as Bhikṣā. Without any difficulty he consumed an inconceivable number of them, causing astonishment to all by that miraculous act. Crossing many streams and passing through several countries, he reached the banks of Payasvinī and from there Anantapuram further south. Here he was challenged by a host of scholars versed in Śaṅkara's philosophy. It is said that Vidyā Tīrtha, the then Ācārya of Śrīgeri Śaṅkara Math, was staying there for his Cāturmāsya (retreat). There seems to have taken

place many acrimonious debates between them. In great anger his antagonist threatened to break his Daṇḍa, the emblem of the Sannyāsin. He bathed at Kanyākumārī, stayed at Rāmeśvaram for four months, and visited Śrīraṅgam and many temples in Tāmil country. Wherever he went large crowds of ordinary men were attracted to him by his prepossessing appearance and scholars by his vast learning. Challenged by scholars to explain the scriptures at one meeting, Pūrṇaprajña demonstrated that each Vedic Sūkta had three meanings, the Mahābhārata ten meanings, and each word of the Viṣṇu-sahasranāma a hundred meanings. After establishing his reputation among the scholars of southern regions, he returned to Uḍupi. The confrontation with scholars of various schools like those of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, made him convinced of the need for founding a new school of thought.

Pilgrimage to Badari

After a short stay at Uḍupi, he started with the permission of his teacher Acyutaprekṣa on his first pilgrimage to North India, accompanied by a few disciples. He passed through many holy spots and sacred streams until he reached Badarikāśrama sacred to Lord Nārāyaṇa. There he dedicated a commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā to the Lord and began expounding it to groups of devotees. Taking the vow of practising austerities there, he spent days bathing in ice-cold water, fasting and meditating. He had now a call from the Lord to visit upper Badari, and to that inaccessible place he proceeded alone. There he had actual communion with Vedavyāsa who lived there with his disciples, invisible to ordinary humanity. Learning from Vedavyāsa that Pūrṇaprajña was the incarnation of Mukhyaprajña, he was shown great respect by the disciples. Vedavyāsa embraced him and gave him a seat among the sages. During the course of his stay in his abode, Vedavyāsa taught him the true meaning of the Vedas, the

Brahma-sūtras, the Mahābhārata, and the Pañcarātra, all of which established the glory of Nārāyaṇa.

In another Āśrama there, Pūrṇaprajña had the vision of Lord Nārāyaṇa. He contemplated on all the incarnations of Nārāyaṇa for fulfilling various divine purposes. He heard the divine voice of Nārāyaṇa that he, Pūrṇaprajña, alone could complete the work which Vyāsa had begun. The Vedānta Sūtras, the Upaniṣads etc. had been misinterpreted by perverse thinkers, and Pūrṇaprajña was commissioned to give their correct interpretation and popularize it among worthy persons. Pūrṇaprajña then wrote his commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras and, as commanded, travelled back to the south of India. At a place on the banks of the Godāvarī he had debates with scholars representing the various systems of philosophy. Ānandatīrtha astonished them all by his knowledge and got the recognition that he was all-knowing. The most illustrious scholars whom he won over were Śobhana Bhaṭṭa from the Godāvarī region and Svāmī Śāstrin from Kaliṅga. In later days they went to Uḍupi and became Sannyāsin followers of Ānandatīrtha under the names of Padmanābha Tīrtha and Narahari Tīrtha, and wrote commentaries on Madhva's works. On his return to Uḍupi. Madhva interpreted his new commentary on Brahma Sūtra to all, including his Guru Acyutaprekṣa. Owing to the latter's strong Advaitic predilection, it was a hard task for Madhva to convince him of his new interpretation. But by the power of scholarship and of his personality, he succeeded in converting him, and then the Guru became the disciple of that illustrious disciple. Acyutaprekṣa made him the head of the Math now or, according to some, even before his North India pilgrimage.

Founding Kṛṣṇa temple at Uḍupi & After

The most outstanding event of Madhva's life during this period of stay at Uḍupi was the founding of the Śrī

Kṛṣṇa temple. It is said that he got a big ball of Gopīcandana (a paste with a kind of earth) inside which the stone image was embedded. The Ācārya had it washed in a nearby lake. Even thirty persons could not carry it to the Math, as the presence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa was infused into it by the sacred touch of the Ācārya. But Madhva, who was all-powerful Vāyu incarnated, could carry it easily. While proceeding to the Math he composed the Dvādaśa-stotra from which we understand the following facts about the image. It was made by Viśvakarma, the heavenly architect, and was worshipped at Dvārakā by the Gopikās as also by Rukmīṇī Devī, the consort of Kṛṣṇa.

Following this important act of installing Kṛṣṇa at Uḍupi, Ānandatīrtha reformed the ways of sacrificial rites, and included them in devotional disciplines, especially for householders. Before the local ruler he debated with and defeated a sinful and wicked Brāhmaṇa named Jaraghaṭita who advocated perverse practices in the performance of Yajñas. The objectionable practices might be the profuse use of Somarasa and performance of animal sacrifices in sacrificial rites. He introduced the use of animal forms made of a paste of black gram powder and ghee in place of animals in the sacrifices. He proclaimed that in the most ancient days Vedic rituals did not allow animal sacrifice. The Ācārya made his younger brother perform a grand sacrifice as reformed by him.

Second pilgrimage to Badari

He next went on another pilgrimage or missionary tour to North India upto Badarikāśrama, crossing mountains and rivers on the way. He was passing through a country ruled by a king named Īśvara Deva who was in the habit of forcing wayfarers to dig the earth for him. On the Ācārya being asked to do this work, he requested the king to show how the work was to be done. When the king demonstrated it, he found he could not stop, but had to continue to work

on helplessly because of the Ācārya's power. On the way he demonstrated many times his physical courage and psychic power in overcoming bands of thieves who came to attack his party. His most remarkable feat was his confrontation with a Turkish (Muslim) chieftain while crossing the Ganges. Owing to a state of war, all boat traffic had stopped and the Turkish king's guards stood there watching for spies crossing the river by stealth. Madhvācārya managed to cross the river even without a boat. The guards of the king, charmed by him, were made inactive. Crossing the river with the party, the Ācārya stood before the king and talked with him in the Turkish language, which he was not known to be acquainted with. The king was so mightily pleased with the manly demeanour, presence of mind and charm of the Ācārya's personality that he even offered a part of his kingdom if he would stay there.

In the Himālayās he threw away with utmost ease a tiger that came to attack his party. At Badarikāśrama he was presented by Vyāsa with a stone containing eight images in which Lord Nārāyaṇa with Lakṣmi was present. This image is known as Vyāsamūrti. Vyāsa further commanded him to give a clear exposition of the essential meaning of the Mahābhārata.

Then the Ācārya came down to the Gangetic valley. On the bank of the Gaṅgā he did a miracle. He walked across the river on foot, without even his cloth being drenched. Reaching the capital city Hastinā, he selected a solitary place a little distant from the Ganges and spent his Cāturmāsya there. It is said that during this time Mother Gaṅgā came in the shape of a woman to worship the Ācārya. In the course of the journey southward, one day he challenged fifteen of his young and strongly built disciples to wrestle with him, and he felled all the fifteen of them simultaneously. The disciples felt that the hold of his hands and fingers had the heaviness of a mountain. Thus he demonstrated that physically also he was as strong as he

was spiritually and intellectually. At Kurukṣetra he told his disciples about his fight there as Bhīmasena in his previous incarnation. When the disciples wanted to see the mace he then used, he asked them to dig at a place, where they found that mighty weapon to their utter astonishment. At the place called Iṣupāta, he demonstrated his extraordinary powers as Māruti by consuming at a sitting a thousand big plantain fruits offered to him as Bhikṣā. At Goa a still more wondrous feat was performed when he consumed four thousand big and luscious plantain fruits along with thirty pitchers of milk.

Stay at Uḍupi and gathering of disciples

Returning to Uḍupi, he does not seem to have undertaken any other missionary tour to distant parts of India. But he was very active at Uḍupi producing many of his works and entering into disputation with hostile thinkers of the neighbourhood. One of such disputations specially mentioned in Madhvavijaya is his acrimonious debate with an evil-minded scholar named Puṇḍarīka Pūrī and his associate Padmatīrtha. Defeated in debate, it is said, these people along with others of their persuasion formed a conspiracy, and adopted by way of vengeance the mean trick of stealing all the valuable manuscripts kept in the Ācārya's library. They thought that the spread of Dvaita doctrines could be arrested thereby. But these precious manuscripts were soon recovered. One day, after the Cāturmāsya of the Ācārya, a messenger from King Jayasimha of Kumbhāṇḍu came to him with an invitation to his palace and to take possession of his lost manuscripts, which he (the king) had recovered from the thieves. The Ācārya with his disciples went to meet the king, who received him with all honour and humility due to a respected Ācārya. The manuscripts were restored to him. The Ācārya then visited at that place the temple of Viṣṇumaṅgala, where a large number of people came to pay their respect to him

and where he gave discourses on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and on the Avatāra of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

This visit of Madhva to Kumbanāḍu was eventful also in that he could get here a very competent disciple in Trivikrama Paṇḍita, the son of Subrahmaṇya Paṇḍita. Trivikrama seems to have been the court Paṇḍit of King Jayasimha, and a noted scholar in Advaita Vedānta, the philosophy that had entrenched itself in those parts in pre-Madhva days. Though he had come to understand something of Madhva's devotional doctrines, his conviction regarding the attributeless nature of Brahman and the flawlessness of Māyāvāda were still intact. He attended Śrī Madhva's discourses in the temple of Viṣṇumaṅgala, at which the latter had been staying for some days. From that temple Madhva now moved to another temple in the village of Paḍikūḍel and gave a wonderful exposition of the various systems of Indian philosophy both orthodox and heterodox and their refutation. Trivikrama Paṇḍita was in the audience and he entered into disputation with the Ācārya. It lasted for fifteen days, at the end of which Trivikrama fell prostrate at the feet of Śrī Madhva as a disciple, abandoning once for all his predilection for Māyāvāda and attributeless Brahman. The Ācārya afterwards gave an exposition of his interpretation of Vedānta-sūtras, on which he had already written a brief commentary at Badari. He now requested Trivikrama to produce a more elaborate and explanatory commentary on it. The Ācārya then dictated what is called his Aṇu-Vyākhyāna on the Sūtras while four of his disciples acted as scribes. It is a very comprehensive work wherein he amplifies the very terse commentary that he had produced earlier at Badari. He gives in this also philosophical criticisms of other interpreters like Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja and refutes the arguments of other Advaitic texts like Iṣṭasiddhi, Vivaraṇa, Bhāmati etc. After this he returned to Pājakakṣetra, the place of his birth.

By this time Madhva had become famous in those regions and many disciples, lay and monastic, joined his sect. Among them one noteworthy person was Madhva's own younger brother, who wanted to take to a Sannyāsin's life after his parents had died. He became a Sannyāsin under the name of Viṣṇutīrtha and is considered the foremost of Madhva's disciples. He performed very severe austerities, after which he engaged himself in very active missionary work and won many converts to the new doctrine. There were also many lay disciples like Trivikramācārya and quite a large number of others who, though not scholars, were ardent devotees of Viṣṇu and of the Dvaita doctrine.

A series of miracles

During this period the Ācārya performed many miracles which astonished all people in the neighbourhood. A king who ruled over some territories near the bank of Gomati was an enemy of the Vedas. He challenged the Ācārya to prove the efficacy of the Vedic Mantras. The Ācārya, uttering the Vedic Sūkta beginning with Yā oṣadhiḥ pūrvajātā, etc., threw on the ground a handful of green gram which at once sprouted, bore flowers and seed gram. One night when all the lamps were by chance extinguished, he enabled the disciples to read from the light proceeding from the nail of his big toe. A huge block of stone, which a number of people together found impossible to move, he lifted and placed in the proper place as easily as Hanumān did with the Gandhamādana mountain! The stone is still there and is called Bhīman Kallu. On a solar eclipse day, along with many followers, he went to the seashore for bath and sitting on the sands, expounded the Aitareya Sūktas for a long time in a voice that drowned the roaring sound of the turbulent sea. When the actual time for the bath came, he calmed that turbulent sea by a side glance and all the assembled people took their bath in it as in a still lake.

Several other incidents demonstrating the extraordinary psychic powers of the Ācārya are narrated in Madhvavijaya. A wrestler named Gaṇḍavāta and his brother tried to strangle him by his neck, but they found the neck as unyielding as a strong iron pipe, and exhausted by their effort, they fell down. They could not even move the Ācārya's little finger. One day he went round the temple of Narasimha carried on the shoulders of a disciple. Certain wrestlers like Śivāgni, Ugra, Amodha and Vāsudeva came to test his strength, but he stood it all like Bhīma himself and a set of very strong people could not pull out even a hair of Śrī Madhva with a pair of tongs. At the village of Pāranti, where the village tank was dry for want of rain, he made a cluster of clouds rain and fill the tank with water. With a small quantity of food, augmented by his miraculous power, he could feed a large number of people. He could himself eat the food of thirty people in one sitting.

All these miracles are mentioned in Madhvavijaya probably to demonstrate that the Ācārya was a giant not only in spirituality and intellectual power, but also in the possession of unique psychic powers and even in sheer physical strength. These justify the claim that he is Mukhyaprāṇa and that in the previous incarnations he was Āñjaneya and Bhīmasena, both noted for their extraordinary physical feats.

Madhva's exit

There is an important item in the tradition of the Mādhva school about the establishment of eight Maths of Mādhva Sannyāsins at Uḍupi for the service at Śrī Kṛṣṇa temple established by the Ācārya. No clear mention of this is made in the Madhvavijaya text. It is natural that, when he established the Kṛṣṇa temple, he should have made some arrangement for the worship. Some commentaries assert that the names of the eight Sannyāsins with whom this tradition of eight Maths started are stated in the text. These Maths

still function effectively and have made Uḍupi the Headquarters of the sect.

We also do not find anything clear about the final exit of Śrī Madhva from this world. It is, however, stated that when Madhva had completed his mission of establishing the new devotional philosophy and religion, Gandharvas and Devas gathered in the region above and showered heavenly flowers over the Ācārya. It is said that under the cover of the heap of flowers that accumulated over him, he disappeared from the world of men. It is believed that he is still at Vyāsa's Āśrama in upper Badari outside the ken of men, absorbed in devotion and samādhi. Rationalists however interpret this to mean that, having completed his mission in the world, Śrī Madhva left Uḍupi for ever to an unknown destination.

Madhva's personality

This short biographical account of Śrī Madhva will impress us with the idea that he was a unique and all-round personality with an original genius and great power, spiritual, intellectual and physical. Whatever one might think of the miracles recorded in Madhvavijaya, this biographical poem has the advantage that it is largely historical. The Vijaya describes him as one with all the physical features of a great man (Mahāpuruṣa). The attractiveness of his personality is thus described in Madhvavijaya: 'People came in large numbers to see that Madhvācārya who shone like the moon, with his gentle smile, lotus-eyes, golden complexion and words of blessing. He was an ornament to the world, though himself bereft of any ornaments on his person. Tall and well-built, he is further described as having 'the dignified gait of a young lion; feet and hands like sprouts; nails defeating ruby in redness; thighs similar to the trunk of an elephant; a broad chest; wall-like shoulder blades; long muscular club-like arms; and face like a moon without the mark of the moon's disc. Those who made

images of Divinities took him as a model for their works of this holy art.'

He emphasized as much on physical fitness as on intellectual and spiritual culture. He was from early days a good athlete, especially in the manly sport of wrestling, in which he could challenge professionals even in his latter days. Besides pilgrimages to neighbouring places in the south, he made two extensive all-India tours on foot in those unsettled times offering meagre facilities of travel. His voice was both loud and sonorous, which could be attuned to musical recitations as also to rise above the roaring sound of a turbulent sea.

Madhva as a thinker

As a thinker he was original and critical, and on all the Vedantic texts he touched upon as an Ācārya, he has cast his own impress, diverging considerably from the beaten track. The new Indian Philosophy of Realism has found in him its most powerful exponent; but as he coupled it with high devotionism and the cult of Nārāyaṇa, his has remained a living system of thought unlike the realistic schools of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika and Sāṅkhya. It is said that in his interpretation of the Ṛg-veda and of the Mahābhārata, he has anticipated some modern trends in the study of those texts. He has shown that Vedas could be interpreted from the mythological, psychological and spiritual angles. In his Ṛg-veda Bhāṣya on 32 Sūktas, he departs from Sāyaṇa, and makes further advance from Yāska also, by giving psychological interpretations and by showing that they convey the knowledge of the one Supreme Being and teach the practice of devotion to Him. He thus anticipates Dayānanda Sarasvatī and Śrī Aurobindo in the method of Vedic interpretation. As a scholar, his learning was vast enough to include in its scope all the Vedas, philosophies, Purāṇas and Itihāsas, as could be found from the quotations in his works. Critics have therefore opined that unlike the

other Ācāryas he quotes more often from the Purāṇas and also refers to unknown passages alleged to be in the Vedas. This criticism however overlooks his real intention. He wanted to establish a Samanvaya, or unification of purport, not only of the passages of the Brahma-sūtras, but of all scriptural texts — Vedic Samhitā, Upaniṣads, Brahma-sūtras, and the Purāṇas.

The thoroughness of his memory and his vast acquaintance with Vedic texts are responsible for his quoting the Vedic passages unknown to others. His intellectualism has given us a vast body of thirty-seven works authored by him on the Philosophy of Realism and the monotheistic theology centering on devotion to Nārāyaṇa. Besides the writings already mentioned, he has given us the following important writings: (1) Gītā Bhāṣya, and also a further elucidation on it called the Gītā-tātparya; (2) A very terse commentary on the Brahma-sūtras, with numerous quotations; (3) Aṇu-vyākhyāna, a work elucidating this commentary with scholarly and philosophical dissertations and criticisms of other schools; (4) Daśopaniṣad Bhāṣya, wherein the Upaniṣads are interpreted in the Dvaita way, as against Śaṅkara's Advaita commentaries on them. Including all these and other smaller ones, his works number thirty-seven, which entitle him to the rank of being one of the most prolific writers among the Ācāryas. But he never gave way to verbose and unnecessary alliteration and figures of speech which had become popular with the development of the Kāvya style of literature in Sanskrit. He is always terse, using expressions pregnant with meaning.

His scholarship and intellectualism never acted as a damper to his devotional spirit. They only subserved his devotion to Nārāyaṇa, the propagation of which was the sole purpose of his endeavours. In the preaching of devotion, besides the older texts, he was the first to make use of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa which was probably unknown in the days of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, as they do not quote

from it but only from Viṣṇu Purāṇa. The reading and interpretation of the Bhāgavata formed a regular feature of his preaching activities, but he guarded against the intrusion of excessive and unbalanced emotionalism, which later became a feature of it in the hands of the followers of Caitanya. He has also written a brief commentary on 1,600 selected verses from it, called the Bhāgavata-tātparya. He was also a tireless missionary who always engaged himself in expounding his devotional doctrine to his disciples and devotees, or in debating with representatives of opposite schools of thought both in the neighbourhood and far off places. It was perhaps this missionary spirit in him that made him give much greater importance to the institution of Sannyāsa than the other Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas. In his own lifetime he initiated several disciples as Sannyāsins and encouraged them to write commentaries on his work and preach the doctrine everywhere. His disciples also did the same. The Kṛṣṇa temple at Uḍupi which he established with the eight Sannyāsins presiding over eight Maths doing the temple service for fixed periods, continues to this day and works for keeping bright the flame of devotion he lighted about half a millennium back.

After Madhva

Śrī Madhva was very fortunate in getting many successors of great devotion and scholarship, by whose work his system of thought received the recognition of scholars all over India and influenced the practice of devotion among many Vaiṣṇava sects. The first and the most prominent among them was Jayatīrtha (1365-88). The son of a nobleman in Mangalavedha, now in Mahārāṣṭra, he became in early life a disciple of Akṣobhya Tīrtha, a direct disciple of Madhva himself and also the head of his Guru's Math after his demise. His monumental work is Nyāya-sudhā which is a lucid commentary on Madhva's Aṇu-vyākhyāna. He commands an exemplary, clear and elegant style suited for philosophical exposition, and his writings are

characterized by great dialectical skill and depth of thought, which helped him to systematize Madhva's thought.

Another great name connected with the elucidation of Madhva's realistic Vaiṣṇavism is that of Vyāsarāya (1478-1539). Born at Banniyur in Mysore State he became in early life itself a Sannyāsin disciple of a great saintly scholar Śrīpādarāja. After gaining mastery of Madhva's Vedānta, he made an in-depth study of Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophies at Kāñcīpuram. His all-sided knowledge of Vedānta helped him to produce Nyāyāmṛta, a superb dialectical work on the Dvaita system, which created a great stir among Advaitins and provoked a scholar of the status of Madhusūdana Sarasvati to write his monumental work Advaita-siddhi, by way of restatement of Advaita and reply to Vyāsarāya's criticism.

Besides doing this service to Madhva in the philosophical field, which is open only to the élite few, he brought the influence of his Master to bear on the great devotional movement known as the Dāsa Kūṭa, which did in Karnāṭaka what the Aḷvār movement did in Tamilnāḍu. Himself a composer of many fervent devotional songs in Kannaḍa, he discovered the genius of Purandaradāsa and Kanakadāsa, great leaders of the movement. Purandaradāsa was a great musician and composer of popular songs that embody the devotional flame that Madhva had lit. Kanakadāsa belonged to the shepherd caste, but Vyāsarāya's liberal outlook embraced him in the bond of discipleship, as in the path of true Bhakti there is no place for considerations of birth. Kanakadāsa's songs also reflect this liberal spirit of the Dāsa Kūṭa movement. The songs and works of these and other great devotee singers influenced also the Bhakti tradition in Mahārāṣṭra centering on the temple of Viṭhobā.

In later days Madhva's philosophy influenced the Caitanya movement of Bengal, when Baladeva produced the Brahma-sūtra commentary of that school, incorporating many of the tenets of Madhva's Dvaita system of thought.

Śrī Madhvācārya :

Philosophy

Dvaita

Introductory

Śrī Madhva's system of Dvaita Vedānta is the most powerful reaction to the extreme idealistic trend verging on solipsism that overtook the non-dualistic Vedānta preached by Śrī Śaṅkara about four centuries earlier. The first reaction was the protest of Bhāskara which is now a forgotten chapter in Indian philosophy. Next came Rāmānuja whose criticism of the Advaitin's two tier theory of Reality, and of his doctrines of an attributeless Supreme Being (nirviśeṣa brahman) , of falsity (mithyātva) of the objective world, and of the unity of Ātman and Brahman was thorough and uncompromising. After that came Nimbārka who gave equal importance to dualism (dvaita) and monism (advaita) as passages of both types are found in the Upaniṣads. According to him, both these types should be taken at their face value without subordinating one to the other. So his system came to be called Dvaitādvaita, and devotion to a Supreme Personal God, as in Rāmānuja's system, became the spiritual ideal of his brand of Vedānta.

As Nimbārka's exact date is not known, it is difficult to say whether Śrī Madhva (1238-1317) came after him or was a late contemporary of his. There seems to be some overlapping of the thoughts of these two in respect of Reality being constituted of two aspects — the Independent Brahman on the one hand and the Dependent Jīva and Prakṛti on the other. Śrī Madhva, who had a great allergy to the word Advaita, would not use that word at all in his system for Brahman. This attitude of his is well

illustrated with the finger pose of two in his majestic picture. He preferred to call his system emphatically as pure dvaita (Dualism) — the doctrine of Reality as having two aspects, the svatantra (Independent) and the paratantra (Dependent). The Independent is God or Brahman, and the Dependent are the Jīva (soul), Prakṛti (Primordial Matter) and other ontological entities. The difference between the Independent and the Dependent is complete and eternal, as it is the basic and irrevocable nature of Reality. Śrī Madhva and his followers did not leave it merely as a theology, but a theology well informed and supported by a philosophy with its own full-fledged logic, epistemology, ontology and ethics, thus justifying its claim to be the Indian version of a philosophy of Realism par excellence.

SECTION I : METAPHYSICS

Sākṣī and the Dominance of Perception

Madhva's system recognizes three Pramāṇas, incorporating also in these the other Pramāṇas recognized by the other systems of philosophy. A Pramāṇa signifies both the means of revealing an object as it is, and also the data revealed through it. The three Pramāṇas recognized are perception (pratyakṣa), reasoning (anumāna) and scriptural authority (āgama). All these give either directly experienced truths or reports of directly experienceable truths. Experience therefore is the basic quest of knowledge, and of all forms of experience sense experience is the most fundamental form of it for all men, though there are other forms of experience also. For a philosophy of realism this is all the more so. Madhva defines a valid sense experience as yathārtha, knowledge of facts as they are. The object experienced must be Anāropitam, not superimposed. Any experience that has a location in time and space is for him yathārtha, a real entity or a fact as it is. The fact experienced may rapidly or slowly undergo change, but that does not subtract from its reality. Permanence of any nature is not

necessary for any entity to be real. There are eternally existing entities, but that does not militate against the reality of changing phenomena.

There are objective experiences other than what the senses convey. The experience of space and time and of pleasure and pain are not outside the body of the perceiving person. So also is one's experience of dream and deep sleep. In these cases, the objects may not be external to the body of the perceiver, but is none the less external to the perceiving subject. In Madhva's system of realism, consciousness is always bi-polar — that is, there must be a knower (jñātā) at one end, and an object (jñeya) at the other end. There is nothing like subject-objectless consciousness. Even in regard to dreamless sleep, this holds good. For, after deep sleep we say, 'I slept long happily.' This indicates that we had awareness of duration of time and experience of happiness.

The significance of this is that there are two types of objective perception — one through the mediation of the mind alone and the other through sense contacts with outside objects. Here we are taking for consideration the latter type. Sense experience is gained by the contact of any sense with a really existent object to which it is sensitive. The object must be outside the knowing subject and must correspond to the knowledge of it gained by the contact.

This immediately raises the question of questions in epistemology — how do we know it is true? The Nayyāyika (logical realists) say that the truth of an experience is only paratassiddha, or established by an extraneous proof. But the truth of that proof is open to the same question again and so on ad infinitum. So Madhva maintains that a valid experience must basically be svatassiddha, self-validating.

This does not mean that there are no erroneous experiences which may be distortions or even illusions. Errors occur because of the defects in the organs of

perception and the placement of the object. If the eye is jaundiced the percepts will also be yellow, and if they are placed far away and not well-lighted, the perception will be unclear. Therefore in Madhva's system of realism, ample scope is given for ascertaining the health of the organs of perception and the distortions in the environment of the object. Even after all such careful examinations, certainty may not arise in the mind, because the presentation by the sense is done through the intellect (buddhi) whose nature is to doubt, thinking of the pros and cons of all experiences that pass through it. Ultimately it is when the energy of the soul (ātman) enlightens the impression presented to it by the senses through the mind and the intellect that certainty arises. This energy of the Ātman that gives certainly is called by Madhva as Sākṣī (witness). When the Sākṣī functions, experience becomes self-validating or svatassiddha. The defects of the organs and placement of objects obstruct the operation of the Sākṣī, and hence one must take all care to remove these obstructions to get valid experience.

Reference has already been made to experiences like joy and sorrow, dream experiences and the sense of duration and peace in deep sleep. In all these, the senses are not involved; yet these experiences are felt positively without any feeling of doubt. They are intuitively experienced by the Sākṣī, the energy of the soul. Experiences of this type also form a proof of the existence of such a validating power, which is indicated in this system by the technical expression Sākṣī. The experiences mentioned above are internal only in the sense that there is no mediation of the sense in their perception; but they too are objective, as already pointed out.

Even in the case of truths, of which we gain conviction through inference and the scripture, it is the validation by the Sākṣī that finally gives conviction. Until then doubts persist. Sākṣī is thus an all important verity in Madhva's

realistic system of philosophy in validating knowledge gained through all Pramāṇas (means of knowledge).

The description of objective perception as yathārtha, factual, raises an important question whether the awareness got thereby is complete and exhaustive of the object. The answer is in the negative. The perceptive awareness of the Jīva is selective and segmentary, although that selected or segmented part is factual. Only the Independent Being, known as Brahman, Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa etc., and the first and foremost of His Dependents, Śrī or Lakṣmī, regarded as His consort, can have that exhaustive and all-comprehending awareness of all Dependent Beings which include all Jīvas and unconscious objects (prakṛti). It is His awareness that is eternally supporting everything. The Jīva, according to the progressive evolution of his psycho-physical organism, through which he gets all his perceptions, becomes more and more a participant of the contents of the awareness of the Independent Being. It is only because of this participating nature of sense perception that it is yathārtha or facts as they are, and not mere subjective projections of the Jīva.

Problem of Illusions

This brings us to the problem of illusory experiences. All Indian systems of philosophy, including that of the Buddhists and the Jains, have their theory of illusions, which is technically called Khyāti-vāda. We shall consider here only those that are relevant to the understanding of Madhva's theory, known as Abhinava-anyathā-khyāti, which is a combination of the Buddhists' Asat-khyāti and the Anyathā-khyati of the Logical Realists, the Nayyāyikas. The Logical Realists explain the traditional example of the illusory perception of silver in nacre thus: 'The silver is not in the shell but in the bazaar. That silver of the bazaar is seen in the nacre and confused with it.' There are three elements involved in this—the locus, silveriness or silver

of the bazaar, and the synthesis of these due to various environmental causes. The illusion thus produced is removed when the sublating perception 'This is not silver but nacre' dawns on the perceiver. The Nayyāyikas maintain that what this sublating knowledge negates is not the actual silver in the bazaar, but only the identification of it with the 'this' or the locus of the nacre. Thus they substantiate their realism even in illusory perception by maintaining that the silver perceived is not false, as it is present in the bazaar. On this Madhva differs. The presence of silver in the bazaar is irrelevant. It is its presentation alone that matters and that is false.

The Buddhist theory of Asāt-khyāti is meant not merely to show that the traditional examples of illusory experience like the silver in the nacre, the snake in the rope, and the water in the desert (in a mirage) are illusory perceptions, but to explain on the basis of such analogy that the whole of our experience of the world as outside is illusory. Yet it is the example of ordinary illusions experienced in life that gives the clue to the nature of the total world experience. The idealist or Vijñānavādīs extend this analogically to the totality of world experience. The Sūnyavādī (Nihilist) Buddhists consider all experience to be like the circle seen when a torch is whirled round and round at a rapid speed. The circle does not actually exist, yet it is experienced. Similarly, non-existence is the nature of the world of everyday experience. It is all Sūnya or something falsely perceived as existing.

Madhva's standpoint

Now Madhva in the first place agrees with the Idealist Buddhists in their total denial of actual existence for the object of illusion, say silver, perceived outside. But he does not deny the locus, the 'this' where the false perception manifests. For in a false perception also there is a real contact of the perceiving faculty, say sight, with a real object

as given in a distorted presentation. That distorted presentation, which has no actual existence, is the illusion. He thus agrees with the Nayyāyika realists in holding that there is a contact between the senses and an object, but it is not with the actual silver of the bazaar but with the distortion of the locus, here in this instance, nacre. So to indicate the combination of the Akhyāti of the Buddhists and Anyathā-khyāti of the Nayyāyikas, Madhva's theory of illusion is called Abhinava-anyathā-khyāti.

The nature of the illusory perception, as conceived by Madhva, will be clearer when we take into consideration the Bādhaka-jñāna or the sublating or stultifying perception. When correct knowledge dawns, we feel, 'No silver is present here; what appeared to exist is non-existent silver.' What is important here is that sublation (bādhā) is possible only in regard to a non-existent entity appearing to be existent — in other words, which is not yathārtha or factual. The silver in the nacre has no factuality even when it is seen. So it is sublatale. Madhva thus accommodates illusions in his theory of knowledge, but gives his own explanation of its nature and genesis, and admits its sublatability. He does not totally deny illusory experiences of the life as is done in Rāmānuja's system in which illusion is denied and explained away on the basis of the Pañcikaṛaṇa doctrine of Vedānta, according to which all elements are supposed to be present in all things.

Cosmic Significance of Illusion Theory

The problem of illusory perception assumes a cosmic significance as some schools of thought considered here extend it into a metaphysical doctrine applicable to the whole world of experience. These schools are the Vijñānavādī (Idealist) and Śūnyavādī (Nihilist) Buddhists as explained earlier, and the Advaitins among the Vedāntins. On the analogy of such illusory experiences, the Buddhists deny the reality of the whole external universe, which is an entity

vouched by the universal experience of all mankind. To this Madhva is opposed.

The Advaita Vedāntin is one with Madhva in refuting both these Buddhistic theories from his Vyāvahārika (empirical) point of view, and concurs partially with them from the Pāramārthika (metaphysical) point of view.

To show how they do it, the Advaita position has to be briefly stated. The Advaita system has three levels of experience — the Pāramārthika or the ultimately (i.e. metaphysically) real, the Vyāvahārika or the empirically real, and the Prātibhāsika or the illusory perception of daily life. The first is Reality as it is — it is the Para-brahman, attributeless and qualityless, beyond the reach of thought and words, and indicated only by indirect-scriptural epithets like Satyam, Jñānam, Ānandam and Anantam — Truth-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute. These are not Its attributes, but the Absolute Itself. Some will go to the extent of saying that these epithets do not directly and positively indicate Brahman, but only indirectly indicate that It is not the opposite of these. In no way can it be a Sūnya, a Nihil, in the Buddhist sense, as it is the untransformed material cause (Vivartopādāna-kāraṇa) of the manifested universe. The universe only appears on it due to Ignorance (avidyā-māyā), but in doing so the Absolute does not get transformed or affected, unlike when wood becomes furniture or milk becomes curd. Being only an appearance caused by Ignorance, the manifold world is like a rope appearing as a snake or a nacre appearing as silver in defective situations. This means that the manifold of daily experience does not exist at all from the frame of reference of the Absolute; but for one in ignorance it is real so long as the illusion caused by Avidyā-Māyā subsists. It is therefore called 'provisionally real' or Vyāvahārika level of reality. It thus takes the nature of both the real and the unreal, viewed from the two frames of reference.

In contrast to this also, is the third level of experience, the ordinary illusions of life, exemplified by the snake in the rope, and nacre in silver. This kind of momentary experience of an illusory nature is called *Prātibhāsika*. The *Vyāvahārika* and the *Prātibhāsika* differ only in that the latter is individually or privately experienced, and is of short duration, while the latter is public and is of cosmic dimension. The cyclically repeated creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe with its countless *Brahmāṇḍas* (cosmic shells), as also the concepts of *Īśvara* who is omniscient and omnipotent and creates and controls the universe, and the concept of the individual soul who gets embodiments in cycles of births and deaths as the result of its *Karma* — in fact all philosophy and religion significant for man comes within the *Vyāvahārika*. But according to many advanced and thorough-going Advaitins — for example *Prakāśānanda* — it is of equal significance with *Prātibhāsika* when viewed from the metaphysical plane of *Paramārtha*.

The Advaitin refutes the idealist Buddhist from the *Vyāvahārika* plane, in which Advaitin is very largely in agreement with realists. We experience the entity called pot apart from the idea of it. There is no proof to show that the object is the product of the idea. The object only corresponds to our idea. As for the *Śūnyavādī* Buddhist, the light circle has a basis in the torch-head, and the circle is actually experienced, and is understood to be unreal when the whirling stops. The experience of the light circle is therefore a *Prātibhāsika* phenomenon, and if extended to the total world experience, it comes to the same as the *Vyāvahārika* level of Advaitism.

The Ontological Status of the three levels

The question now arises as to what reality status should be given to the *Vyāvahārika* experience, which is vouched by humanity as a whole for all time. The Advaitin

distinguishes it from the Prātibhāsika like the experience of silver in nacre and snake in the rope only in respect of the difference in the duration of their persistence. The Vyāvahārika persists for all time for those who have not attained the Pāramārthika level, whereas the Prātibhāsika is *tuccha*, merely momentary. But during the time of experience the Prātibhāsika objects are felt to be as real as the Vyāvahārika. Hence arises the necessity of ascertaining the reality status of both.

The Advaitin seeks to cut the Gordian knot by positing an intermediate state of reality between the metaphysically real and the apparently real, and justify it by the illustration of the Prātibhāsika or common illusions of life. He calls this intermediary reality as *Sad-asad-anirvacanīya*, indeterminate existent non-existent experience. It is existent, because it is actually experienced; it is also non-existent because it is sublated. Sublated means that it is stultified and revealed as having never existed really even when it was being experienced as real. So it is a category forming a mixture of both reality and unreality, and for this reason indeterminate (*anirvacanīya*) in either way exclusively. This is called *Anirvacanīya-khyāti*. Both the Vyāvahārika and the Prātibhāsika coincide in respect of this description except in the length of the duration of experience. It means that all of us who are experiencing this world are in intermediate state of reality which will pass away along with the sense of its previous existence, when the Pāramārthika level of experience dawns on us.

Madhva's standpoint vis-a-vis the Advaitin's

It is on such a characterisation of the universal world experience of all humanity that Madhva fires all the broadsides of his criticism. According to him the Advaitin's description of Prātibhāsika is not correct and cannot be equalled or considered parallel with the universal world experience. In the common illusion of daily life, the object

perceived, say the silver or the snake, are not there. We have seen that in this respect Madhva agrees with the Buddhist idea of Akhyāti according to which the object perceived in illusion is non-existent. But the Buddhist is wrong in stating that there is no sense contact with any objectively existent substance. If it were so there would have been no perception at all. There is the actual contact of the sense of sight with a substratum, say of nacre when the illusion of silver is seen on it. Here Madhva is one with the Anyathākhyāti of the logical realists (the Nayyāyikas), as far as a real sense contact is concerned. But he totally differs from them in their view that this contact is with the silver that exists elsewhere, say in the bazaar. Such a contact is physically impossible. The sense organ can contact only the locus or the substratum, which offers the false presentation of the object on account of some defect in the organ of vision and positioning of the object. Such a false presentation is illusion. Its characteristic is the absolute absence of the illusory presentation while there is real contact with the locus or substratum on which the illusory presentation occurs. The acid proof of the illusory nature of the presentation is the bādhaka-jñāna or the sublating mentation, 'There is no silver there. There is only the nacre.' Madhva's theory of illusion in which the Akhyāti of the Buddhist and the Anyathā-khyāti of the Nayyāyikas are thus combined, is known as Abhinava-anyathā-khyāti.

It is particularly important to note here that this illusion theory of Madhva maintains that bādha or sublation is possible only of a non-existent object which appears as existent for the time being only. Madhva's definition of really existent entity is that it is anāropita (not superimposed) and therefore yathārtha, a fact as it is. Such an entity alone can be in a space-time setting. The silver observed in the nacre is not so. It is not yathārtha — existent in any sense in spite of it being perceived. To describe it as existent

and non-existent at the same time, as Advaitins do, is only a verbal fiction. The existent is the contradictory of the non-existent, without any middle ground between them. So they cannot coexist.

Madhva therefore staunchly opposes the extension of the logic of perceptive illusion to the world-experience of the whole of humanity. The objects of world experiences may be changing continuously, but change is not sublation, as it takes place only in space-time setting, and further does not reveal any underlying hidden substratum, as is the case when an illusory experience is sublated. Madhva therefore vehemently rejects the equation of world experience with the illusory experience, as also the endowment of the former with the status of an intermediary, pseudo-reality as *Sad-asad-anirvacanīya* or the real-unreal of indeterminable nature. Such a category is a fictitious, illogical and dogmatic assumption, and to extend it analogically to the universally certified world experience is nothing short of philosophical perversity. If this analogy is to be an illustration, the invalidity of perception has got to be proved first, and then only this analogy can be of any significance.

As against this position of Mādhvite philosophers, the Advaitins maintain that the *Vyāvahārika* is sublatale and is sublated when consciousness gets established in the metaphysical or *Pāramārthika* level. The *Vyāvahārika* world is then realised as disappearing like the illusion of silver when the nacre is recognised. The evidence of it is the experience of the perfected sage, and the authority of the Upaniṣads. The Dvaitins dispute both these claims. If there is at all a non-dualistic experience, it is only the temporary disappearance of world consciousness in the blissful absorption of the *Jīva* in mystic communion with the Divine. They further maintain that it would be supreme folly to set aside so lightly the universal experience of all humanity for all time in preference to a hypothetical experience of

a Paramārtha view of its stultification, which if at all true, may only be a misinterpretation of an experience.

As for those Upaniṣadic passages supposed to have non-dualistic import the Dvaitin interprets them in his own favour with the help of grammar and what he calls the Mīmāṃsa rules of interpreting Vedic exegesis. Thus they occupy irreconcilable positions.

The Advaitic dialecticians have attacked the Dvaitin's view of the external world from the point of view of reasoning also. They have formulated logical dilemmas and syllogisms showing the logical contradictions in accepting the reality of world experience. The Madhva thinkers have brought counter arguments to them, and this state of intellectual warfare, which often descends to the level of verbal warfare, has been going on to this day. The basic position of the Mādhvas is that each pramāṇa or way of knowledge is supreme in its own field, and cannot be displaced or disproved by the pramāṇa relevant for another sphere. To do so will be like trying to disprove what the nose smells by what the ear hears. Pratyakṣa or sense perception is supreme in knowing the external world through sense contact. Close observation and sound reasoning based on it has, as already been stated several times, the right to correct and estimate the distortions and mistakes in such data which obstruct the operation of the Sākṣī. After the Sākṣī has certified, the observer has arrived at yathārtha — fact as it is. It cannot be further questioned, as that will lead to infinite regress. What the power of the senses reveals has correspondence with an object independent of the observer, making allowance for all distortions due to positioning and defect of the instruments, which sound reasoning supported by close observation can correct. But sophistic arguments leading to absurd conclusions like 'slow tortoise is faster than the quick Achilles', cannot touch the validity of what the senses perceive. For such perceptions

are segments of the sense world which God or the Independent Being sustains in His awareness.

Scriptural authority: Upajīvyā Upajīvaka texts

Scriptural authority is accepted by the Dvaitins like all other schools of Vedānta. But its authority can be invoked only regarding facts which are beyond the ken of the senses. A sense perception certified by the Sākṣī cannot be contradicted by the scripture. That fire is cold cannot be sustained by scriptural authority, as it contradicts valid perception. If there are such statements in the scripture, they have to be interpreted in a rational manner. It is here that reasoning plays its proper part in scriptural exegesis.

It is from the scripture that we get an understanding of the nature and attributes of Brahman, the Independent Being and His relation with the Jīva or individual soul, and of the various ontological substances included in the Dependent Reality. In the Vedas there are several passages which teach diversity and also many which teach unity of existence. Different Ācāryas have interpreted their inter-relation differently in order to suit their doctrines. The Advaitins look upon the texts concerning diversity as only a repetition of what we already know through other Pramāṇas, and according to them they are stated in the Vedas not to teach their reality but to facilitate their denial through Abheda-vākyas or texts teaching unity. Scripture is important for revealing something new and which cannot be got in other ways. Unity or Advaita alone is such a new experience uncertifiable by any other means, while diversity is a common experience. It is a mere appearance, never true metaphysically. They therefore explain away the Bheda-passages.

The Madhva Dvaitins look at these scriptural texts in the opposite way. In the light of the Mīmāṃsa rules of interpretation of Vedic texts, the Dvaitins make a distinction between Upajīvyā or basic texts, and Upajīvaka or

dependent and explanatory texts. The latter depend on the former. The diversity consisting of Īśvara with innumerable attributes, the countless Jīvas and primordial matter controlled by Īśvara are asserted by the Upajīvyā (basic) texts. They form the sustaining ground of the Upajīvaka texts, namely of those that seem to teach an attributeless Brahman and denial of diversity. If these sustaining texts are rejected or explained away, the Upajīvaka or supported texts declaring the unity of existence will have no legs to stand upon and will naturally collapse like a building without a foundation. To assert the unity of the many in the one, the many must be there always. The unity that is asserted must be of a nature that does not swallow up the many. That will be like killing the patient in the name of curing his disease. So the passages that seem to teach unity, which the Advaitins interpret as demolishing or sublating all diversity including God with auspicious attributes and the Jīvas and the worlds under His control, have to be interpreted in a different way. Mādhva philosophy finds such an interpretation in establishing the Independent Being with whom all other real but dependent beings are coeval. The dependent reality, though different from the Independent Being, is not created by Him. It is coeval with Him eternally, but has its existence absolutely supported by Him as a shadow is by a post or a reflection is by its original. Madhva interprets all absolutist and Advaita passages in this way in his numerous commentaries and establishes that the Vedas, the revealed scriptures, and all the Smṛtis, or texts composed by great sages, teach Dvaita or Duality of the Independent Being and of Dependent Beings supported by Him. These teach a doctrine of pure monotheism combined with uncompromising realism.

The concept of Viśeṣa

The concept of Viśeṣa is another speciality in the Mādhva theory of knowledge just like that of Sākṣī which we have considered already. In all systems of thought the

problem of the relation between substance and attributes is one of the most tantalizing questions. Our mental operations have necessarily got to make this distinction. We see a table with red colour. Many attributes of it like its colour, the decoration kept on it, its shape, hardness, liability to fire etc., are simultaneously observed. We think of these as separate entities but perceive that they all have a common reference. This point of common reference we distinguish from the attribute as the substance. It is sometimes called the 'thing-in-itself'. As a solution to this problem some thinkers maintain that there are only attributes, because we see only them actually. There is nothing like a 'thing in itself' beyond them. But thought compels us to accept substratum of common reference for all of them.

Some of such attributes can be easily removed from the object without any impairment to it. The pots on a table, decorations kept on it, etc., are examples of this. Such easily separable attributes are only just joined externally with an object, and their relation with the latter is called *Samyoga*. As contrasted with it are the inherently joined attributes which, though distinguishable, form a whole with the object, and cannot be separated from it, as for example, the whiteness of a white flower. Though inseparable, whiteness can be proved to be distinct from the flower. A blind man cannot see the whiteness of the flower, yet he can identify the flower from its other attributes and handle it. It happens to be so because, in spite of its distinction, whiteness is inherently related to the flower unlike an externally joined attribute. Such inherent relation is called *Samavāya* by the *Naiyāyika* (logical) realists.

An insuperable difficulty is however involved in making the *Samavāya* relation credible. If this is to be an internal relation between the two, then that relation will require two other relations to relate it to the two terms and thus ad infinitum. This becomes necessary, because *Samavāya* or

an inherent relation is in itself regarded as a category by the Nayyāyika realists. There are several other alternatives in respect of the relation between substance and attribute. One may say that substance and attributes are identical. Its implication is that in that case there is no question of any relation between them. But we actually see a distinction, as we have already pointed out. If they are separate entities, Samavāya relation of the Nayyāyikas becomes external to the two terms and thus ceases to be Samavāya or inherent and inextricable relation. The remaining alternative is to hold that the relation that is posited between the two terms has an inherent capacity to unite itself with them both. As this is a very round about way of thinking, leading to a multiplicity of terms, it is better to consider that the substance has in itself a self-linking capacity to connect itself with the attributes. This self-linking capacity of substances with their attribute is called *Viśeṣa* by Madhva. The advantage of accepting this self-linking capacity is that it eliminates a third entity called 'Inherent Relation' (Samavāya) between the substance and attribute.

The doctrine of *Viśeṣa* thus solves the dualism of substance and attribute by reducing it into identity-in-difference. The attribute thereby becomes one in entity with the substance, but is yet distinguishable in an indivisible manner from it. The attributes do not *exist* apart from the substance but *subsist* in it inseparably and show themselves. Thus though they both constitute one entity, yet they are only one as two by virtue of distinguishability by *Viśeṣa*.

Mādhva philosophers specially warn against the mistake made by some in identifying the *Viśeṣa* of their philosophy with the *Viśeṣa* of the Nayyāyikas or even considering it as a derivation of the latter. The *Viśeṣa* of the Nayyāyikas is only an attribute or part which is separate from the substance but linked with that substance by the Samavāya (internal) relation. Madhva's *Viśeṣa* is, on the other hand.

a self-linking potency inherent in the substance to link itself with any number of attributes without the help of another entity called Samavāya relation. The substance and attributes form an inseparable whole. Thus Viśeṣa, while it distinguishes, unites too.

But we are also warned by Mādhva philosophers that Viśeṣa should not be invoked where there is entirely separable difference between entities. Difference is a distinct and very important category in Madhva's philosophy of realism. The concept of Viśeṣa is not meant to supplant difference. On the other hand its function is to help the separation of entities that cannot form integrated wholes and must necessarily remain different from one another. Viśeṣa and Bheda (difference) are supreme each in its own field.

The Metaphysics of Bheda (Difference)

In Madhva's Philosophy of Realism the concept of difference holds a dominant place. It is called Dvaita or the 'Doctrine of the Two', because it accepts two entirely separate substances, the Independent Reality (God) and the Dependent Reality (the Jīvas, Nature and other allied categories). The Dvaita is however further elaborated into Pañca-bheda or the five-fold differences. The familiar Sanskrit word Prapañca is interpreted by him as follows to yield that meaning: Pra-pañca = Prakarṣeṇa pañca-vidho bhedaḥ.

These five differences are: between 1) Jīva and Jīva, 2) Īśvara and Jīva, 3) Īśvara and Jaḍa or inanimate substance, 4) Jīva and Jaḍa, 5) Jaḍa and Jaḍa. These five differences that form the skeleton of Madhva's theology, are based on the metaphysics behind the concept of Bheda (Difference). The Vaiṣṇavite doctrine, that only through devotion and self-surrender to the Supreme Being can the Jīva secure salvation, presupposes a basic difference between them. This theological doctrine can stand erect on a logical basis

only if difference is established through metaphysics as an ultimate category. Hence Mādhvites attach the greatest importance to the metaphysics of Bheda or Difference. Besides, the complete separation of God from the Jīva and the world, which are soaked in evil, is needed to shield Him from that stain and preserve His absolute Amalatva or purity. This is the necessity of any rigorous theism, like that of Mādhvaism.

What is the metaphysical status of the experience of difference we all feel between objects of our perception? This is the basic consideration that is involved in this problem. The Advaita philosophers solve it by characterizing the experience of difference as an illusion, because no logically consistent theory can be formed of its experience. They point out that difference must be in relation to two entities. It must either be a different entity coming between them or it must be attributes attached to one or the other or to both entities. It is impossible to think of it as an entity coming between. For in that case we must be able to see difference separately, which is impossible. Then we may maintain that difference exists in the two terms as their attribute. In order to see attributiveness of difference in the terms we must first of all see the difference between the two terms and their differences from their attribute of difference. We get bogged in infinite regress at this stage. For such reasons Advaitins consider that no logical statement can be made of difference, and hence it has to be relegated as an illusion resulting from Avidyā.

Madhva however objects to this attitude. If the time-honoured definitions are found inadequate, we have to seek for new ways of definition, and not reject the fact. Difference is an actual experience, and our life is based on its recognition. But for difference no two individuals can maintain their separateness. We shall not be able to distinguish between sweet and bitter, between a rowdy and a gentleman, between a man and a woman. Everything

would be engulfed in an imponderable homogeneity. But the fact of experience is otherwise. The realities of our daily life may be brushed aside on the Advaitin's premise that they all belong to the Vyavahāra state, which is as unreal as the Prātibhāsa (the short-lived illusory experience like a snake in the rope). But Madhva, as already pointed out, does not accept the two-tier conception of Paramārtha and Vyavahāra, which is a basic tenet of Advaita. The sense experience of different entities certified by the Sākṣī is ultimate and real.

So the Mādhvites are firm in their view that the really felt experience of difference cannot be discarded as illusion merely on the ground that the hitherto accepted definitions of it lead us to logical absurdities. What is required is to find a new and adequate way of stating the nature of difference. They maintain that the Advaitic dialecticians had formulated their criticism before Madhva had introduced his theory of Viśeṣa, discussed earlier. Till then the logic of the Nayyāyikas made an absolute distinction between substance and attributes, and invoked a separate category called Samavāya (inherence) to connect them. From this way of thinking, infinite regress can be the only result when one tries to logically define the concept of difference.

In contrast to earlier thinkers, Madhva maintains that difference is of the very nature of a substance (Saviśeṣa-padārtha-svarūpa). To say that we see an entity means to say that we see it particularly as different from another and, generally, as from all others. There is only one psychosis involved in the perception of both the entity and its difference from others. It is Viśeṣa, the self-linking capacity of substances, that enables them to digest the attributes into their very nature without however obstructing the capacity of attributes to display themselves. Difference is one of these attributes thus self-linked with all substances by their very nature or essence, thus making the perception of a substance equivalent to perceiving its difference from

all others. The technical term used for it is Saviśeṣa-bheda. But for Viśeṣa, identity with essence would have meant the obliteration of difference.

Substances have this self-linking capacity of difference in an unlimited measure. What the exigencies of a given situation require are alone displayed at a particular time, but the others lie imbedded in it and become manifest when required. Thus with the help of Viśeṣa, Madhva gives a valid definition of difference as Saviśeṣa-bheda. Madhva utilizes this concept of difference not only in regard to our daily experience of life, but in formulating the Pañca-bheda, the five differences, which form the pillars of his theology. Thus it is the concept of Viśeṣa, which is an original contribution of Madhva, that has given a new logical status to the concept of difference and thereby made Realism a credible philosophy.

SECTION II Ontology

Ontology or Ultimate Categories

Ontology is that part of philosophy dealing with the categories or units recognised in a system as ultimate. In the Dvaita doctrine of Madhva they are ten in number. These are: Substance (Dravya), Quality (Guṇa), Action (Karma), Class Character (Sāmānya), Particularity (Viśeṣa), the Qualified (Viśiṣṭa), the Whole (Amśī), Power (Śakti), Similarity (Sādrśya), and Negation (Abhāva). A short description of these is here attempted. A more elaborate treatment of important entities of religious importance will be given afterwards.

I. Dravya or Substance is the substract of attributes and the material cause of evolutionary transformation in the case of some entities like Prakṛti and of emanation in others like Brahman and the Jīva. If it is not granted, attributes will have no common reference. To deny it and see only

attributes, will eliminate a common reference and end in Buddhist Nihilism. There are several substances.

(1) Brahman or Viṣṇu is the first and most important of these. Reality is apprehended as two — the Independent and the Dependent. God or Viṣṇu is the only Independent Substance possessing infinite auspicious attributes and having absolute control over the Dependent category, into which all other substances are grouped.

(2) Lakṣmī: Among the dependent entities some are endowed with consciousness (Cetana) and others are unconscious (Acetana). The first and foremost of conscious entities is Lakṣmī represented as the Consort of Viṣṇu. Though dependent absolutely, she has no bondage and is coeval with the Independent Viṣṇu and is therefore called Samānā (equal). Like Viṣṇu, she is all-pervading and has no material form, but can manifest in infinite forms. Though the perfect being Viṣṇu has nothing to gain from her, He has given her the place of His Consort and bestowed on her cosmic powers. The Lord has been gracious enough to bestow on her the power to control the destiny of Jīvas and the modifications of Nature (Prakṛti).

(3) Jīvas: Being centres of intelligence among dependent entities, they come under the Cetana (conscious) substances. Though conscious they are under beginningless ignorance and bondage.

(4) Avyākṛtākāśa: It is unmodified space, as distinguished from physical space (Bhūtākāśa). The former exists unsupported eternally even in dissolution by the will of the Lord while the latter is an evolute of Prakṛti forming one of the well-known five elements. Avyākṛtākāśa enables the perception of directions (Dik), east, west, up, down, etc. But for it everything would be jumbled indiscriminately. The evidence of Sākṣī certifies its reality.

(5) Prakṛti: It is the insentient (Jaḍa) stuff, the material cause out of which all creation proceeds at the will of Viṣṇu.

It is entirely subordinate to Him. All objects of the universe, including the psycho-physical organisms of all living beings are made out of it.

(6) The three Guṇas: These are Sattva, Rajas and Tamas (Guṇa-traya), which the Lord projects out of Prakṛti by His desire to create. By the combination of these Guṇas, all the other categories of creation from Mahat to Reflection, numbering fourteen came into existence.

II. Guṇas or Attributes: Attributes do not stand by themselves like substances, but always depend on substances. The concept of attributes includes the auspicious attributes of God also. Their number is countless and include physical, mental and spiritual attributes, but exclude all bad qualities as far as God is concerned.

III. Karma or Action: It is neither a substance nor a quality, but subsists in substance. They are of two kinds, Puṇya (meritorious) and Pāpa (sinful), and are responsible for the pleasing and painful experience of Jīvas.

IV. Sāmānya or Universal: It is the property by which we see something common in a plurality of cases. Thus we have words like table, bench, animal, man, etc., denoting a large number of similar entities. The class grouping is only in the mind of the perceivers. Externally there are only many individuals that resemble one another. Such resemblance or Sādrśya is what Mādhvites accept as the universal and not a mental construct as some other systems do.

V. Viśeṣa or Difference-Identity: This category is a special contribution of Madhva and has been discussed at length in the theory of knowledge. It is with this concept that Madhva solves the problem of attribute and substance and also establishes his theory of difference which is the backbone of his system. In the light of this concept which endows substances with a self-linking capacity with attributes, we are able to distinguish between a substance

and its numerous attributes forming one unit with it. Difference is an invariable attribute of substances forming its very nature.

VI. The Viśiṣṭa or the Qualified: 'A thing-in-itself (Viśeṣya) with qualifying adjuncts (Viśeṣaṇas) seen together in a single perception as one, is the Viśiṣṭa. The subtraction or addition of any Viśeṣaṇa will produce a new Viśiṣṭa (qualified whole). The whole is thus something more than its parts. The extreme realism of the Mādhvites compels them to consider it a category.

VII. Amśī: An entity that has parts is an Amśī. The Amśī may be called the unit and Amśa, a fraction. For example the cloth with numerous threads is the Amśī. This concept is used also in regard to conscious entities. The incarnations of God are called Svarūpāmśa or a fraction of potency, one with the entity itself. The Jīva is called a Bhinnāmśa or a potency in separation.

VIII. Śakti: is capacity or Power: It is said to be of four kinds. a) Brahman's capacity beyond the comprehension of man, b) Induced power as in consecrated images, c) The supersensory power or talent in causes to produce effects, and d) The power of words to convey meanings.

IX. Sādrśya: Resemblance or Similarity. After seeing one cow, when we see another, we see not only a new cow but also resemblance between the two. As resemblance as such cannot reside in either of the cows, it must be recognised as a separate Padārtha.

X. Abhāva or Negation: Though negation is not positive, we perceive it. It is because we see negation that we notice the absence of a watch perceived on a table, after the latter is removed. There are four kinds of negation! 1) Prāgabhāva is the perception of the non-existence of a pot before it is made. 2) Pradhvamsābhāva is the perception of the absence of a thing after it is destroyed. 3) Anyonyābhāva: Reciprocal negation e.g. jar is not cloth.

4) Atyantābhāva: It is absolute non-existence like a barren woman's son or the horn of a hare.

SECTION III Theology

Brahman (God): His nature and attributes:

In the earlier sections the metaphysics of Madhva's Dvaita Vedānta has been discussed. It is uncompromising realism. But like all other great Vedāntic Ācāryas, Madhva was not interested in building a mere intellectual structure. His object was to build an intellectual structure that will help the intellectually stimulated people to sustain their faith in a real God and a real spiritual destiny for man to be attained through devotional disciplines enlivened and enlightened by love and knowledge, and crowned by the grace of God. Pañca-bhedas (the fivefold difference) described earlier are the main pillars of that structure and the metaphysical concepts of Sākṣī, Viśeṣa and Bheda are the fabrics with which it is built. But all these stand only to serve a devotional purpose.

The three main entities involved in the five differences are Brahman (God), Jīva (individual souls) and Prakṛti (insentient primordial nature). As already pointed out, Reality has two aspects: the Independent Being and the Dependent Beings. Brahman is the former and Jīvas, Prakṛti and other eternal and non-eternal entities are dependent beings. Among these countless number of dependent beings the acceptance of an Independent Being is not merely credible but very necessary too. The many will be in a state of chaos if there is not that One, different from them, to control and direct them. One from among themselves cannot do it, as it would itself be dependent and of limited power and capacity.

We find a rhythm and order in Nature, and for aught we know, it looks purposive. If an Independent Being above them is not accepted, this order and rhythm will have to

be attributed to mere chance — a hypothesis that is most unsatisfactory and worse than the acceptance of an Intelligence transcending Nature. For, that Intelligence should be all-powerful and omniscient, as we find signs of these prominently displayed at least in a limited way in the entities dependent on Him. So these dependent entities can be accepted as a pointer to that Independent Being. That Being is Brahman, identical with Viṣṇu in Madhva's system.

While such an inferential acceptance of a Supreme and Independent Being is very credible, it is yet a postulate only and not a proof. It can at best give us a designer God, limited by His materials, and not an independent Supreme Being. Besides, it cannot give us any idea of His nature and His relation to the determination of man's destiny.

The concept of a God can be confirmed and fully established only on the evidence of the Veda, the revealed scripture. Besides the confirmation of His existence, His functions, nature and attributes and His place in man's life are understood only through the revealed scripture, supplemented by the texts composed by enlightened sages like Vyāsa whose authority is accepted by all Vedāntins. Madhva further identifies Him on Vedic authority with Viṣṇu, known also by several other names like Nārāyaṇa, Īśvara, Bhagavān, Puruṣottama, Kṛṣṇa etc. Mādhva philosophers stoutly maintain that He is a Being with a character (Saguṇa), and is in that sense a Personality. But limitation is not an essential feature of personality, unlike in the case of organisms with a psycho-physical body as tenement. For, Viṣṇu, while a person, pervades everything and is not anthropomorphic. He has no particular material form but can manifest in any form, being a centre of all force, power, will, auspiciousness, goodness, beauty, grace, responsiveness etc. He is far better described by a term like Saguṇa (Person with a character, responsiveness and auspicious attributes) than by Nirguṇa (an impersonal,

amoral and irresponsible being). For, a being corresponding to the latter description reminds us more of an impersonal, inanimate and blind force like electricity and other similar forces of Nature than of a Sat-cid-ānanda which is the term applied to Brahman of the Upaniṣads. For want of a better word in English, we are forced to use the expressions Personal and Impersonal for these two trends of thought. When the Veda describe Him as Sat-cid-ānanda and Ananta, it means that these are His essence and being, His substance and attribute in an infinite and absolute sense. He is both Knowledge and Knower, Bliss and Blissful. He has no physical body of matter. The substance of His being are Caitanya and Ānanda (Consciousness and Bliss). They are His attributes too.

God as the All-Creator

In all schools of Vedānta and other Indian systems, God is looked upon as the great Creator. It is a most essential part of these systems. The Vedānta-Sūtras therefore have as their second aphorism "*Janmādyasya Yataḥ* — That out of whom the origin etc., of the world has taken place." As against this, the Sāṅkhyas, who look upon Prakṛti (Primordial Nature) and Puruṣas (individual souls) as independent reals, consider these two alone as sufficient to account for this creative process and have eliminated God from their system.

For the Vedāntins who accept Brahman as Satyam (Truth), Caitanya (Consciousness), Ānanda (Bliss) and Amala (Untainted), all in an infinite sense (Ananta), the problem is how to preserve this nature of Brahman while accepting this world of imperfection and evil as created by Him out of Himself. What should be the relation of the One to the many for securing this? Advaitins solve the problem with the help of the two-tier theory of Reality. God and creation are relevant only in the Vyavahāra (practical) level of reality, which has no ultimacy. In a metaphysical sense or the Paramārtha (the ultimately real

plane), Brahman for them is the only existence, and is the cause of the world only in an apparent sense as the rope is of the snake perceived on it in an illusion. It means there is no real creation at all, and hence Brahman is unaffected. Bhedābheda school of Vedāntins like Bhāskara consider Brahman as really getting transformed as the world and the Jīvas with the aid of an Upādhi (adjunct), but remains unaffected in the process by His inconceivable potency. Rāmānuja preserves the unity and purity of Brahman by his Śarīra-śarīrī (body-soul) theory of Brahman. According to this theory Brahman is like an All-inclusive organism, in which Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) is the soul, while the Jīvas and Prakṛti constitute His body. Though they are three, the latter two are related to the world-soul Nārāyaṇa in non-reciprocal dependence (Aprthak-siddhi) and constitute one Being. His essence is unaffected while His superficial layer of Prakṛti and Puruṣas evolve into the universe. Even in a wise man, a Sthitaprajña, bodily affectations do not taint the soul. Much less will it in the case of the Supreme Being who is all wisdom by nature and perfect in His attributes. It is against this background of earlier Vedāntic thinkers that Madhva propounds his theory of Brahman as the great cause of the universe.

Madhva seeks to solve the problem by his theory of reality as having two aspects — the one Independent (Svatantra) or God, and the other Dependent (Asvatantra) constituted of Prakṛti, Jīvas and other eternal existences. The Dependent are not generated by Him from Himself in any sense of the term as described earlier in other systems of Vedānta or from a *Nihil* as in Christianity. Though these dependent entities are not generated by Him, they co-exist with Him eternally, supported by His will and entirely controlled by Him. They are dependent on Him in their pristine nature and in all transformation that they may undergo. The question may be asked whether it is credible to consider an eternally co-existent entity as dependent on

the other. In answer it is said that dependence can be true of both non-eternals and eternal. If non-eternals can exist for a time by a will of another, by the same logic eternally existing entities too can owe their eternal existence to an independent reality. A theory of this kind secures complete freedom of Brahman from any diminution or contamination from creation, while asserting at the same time His absolute controllership of all the dependent entities involved in the creative process

Next arises the question how He exercises His control over these co-existent eternal entities and justifies His claim to be the all-creator. Madhva solves the problem by his theory of Parādhīna-viśeṣāpatti — the attainment of partial modification owing to the dependence on another. Ontological entities are of two kinds — some are absolutely originated and perishable while some others are eternal. Among the eternal entities are Prakṛti, Jīva, time, space and the Vedas. Change in the creative process is also of two kinds in respect of these two types of entities. The non-eternal types come into being in their entirety, undergo change in nature and they perish. In the case of eternal substances, the creative process consists in generating new temporary traits without modifying the substratum which is co-eternal with the Creator. For example Prakṛti evolves Mahat and the subsequent categories when it is stirred by the will of the Lord, but when the creative process terminates at the end of the creative cycle, the eternal substance Prakṛti remains in its pristine form, and again brings forth the world when the new cycle starts. The change in the Jīva, who is by nature a centre of intelligence and bliss, is generated by ignorance (Avidyā). Consequently he gets bound to various kinds of bodies. When ignorance is effaced by the grace of God, the Jīva subsists in his own basic nature which cannot be modified by all the bodily changes.

Creation in the case of eternal entities therefore means the generation of some new traits in the unchanging

substratum with which its essential attributes are internally unified. The generation of such new traits cannot be taken as the generation of the whole. They last temporarily while the substratum with its inherent and essential attributes remains unchanged.

A Note of Dissent

A note of dissent has been sounded in recent times in respect of the nature of eternal substances by Prof. Raghavendrachar of the Mysore University in his book 'The Dvaita Philosophy and its Place in Vedānta' and his articles in several philosophical journals. He is of the view that the so-called eternal entities like Prakṛti, Jīva etc., are also created in the fullest sense by God, and it is therefore wrong to call Madhva's system as Dvaita or Dualism. For according to Him God is the only absolute reality and monism will be the proper name for the system. In his view true dependence on God will be achieved only if these entities are fully grounded in, and not coeval, with Him. To be coeval, the entities concerned must have an existence of their own, and that will militate against the status of God as the only Independent Entity. Independence is complete only if it covers both the entity and the functioning of the substance concerned. Such a God alone will be an omnipotent and Supreme Creator.

No other Mādhva scholar supports this view of Prof. Raghavendrachar, which contradicts the age-old traditional understanding of Mādhva doctrines. If the commonly admitted created entities can exist for a time in separation and dependence on God, there is no reason why the same logic cannot be applied to coeval entities also without violating God's independence. The idea that dependence of an entity on another is secured or proved only if the former is generated by the latter is only a prejudice. Besides, one who has generated another need not at all have absolute control over the latter. A son is born of his parents, but

that will not establish any natural and absolute control for them over him.

Dr. B.N.K. Sarma points out that Prof. Raghavendrachar's views are born out of a total mis-understanding of Madhva's doctrine of Parādhīna-viśeṣāpatti, a doctrine which we have already described. As it is a difficult idea, a repetition of it will not be out of place. According to this doctrine change is of two kinds. One kind of change can transform the basic nature of a substance, as when milk changes into curd. The substance itself is lost and something else takes its place. The change in regard to eternal entities like Prakṛti, Jīva etc., is not of this kind. The change is not a change of basic-nature (Dharmī-svarūpa) but is the generation of many new traits or subsidiary characteristics which can also be eliminated without any impairment to the substance in question. If it were otherwise, the change should have been described as Parādhīna-svarūpāpatti. The nature of this change will be clear from the fact that Prakṛti or Primordial Matter, after undergoing all the transformations in the course of the evolutionary process which creation involves, regains, its primeval nature as Prakṛti when the creative cycle ends. So also the Jīva, which is basically a centre of knowledge and bliss, becomes burdened with a physical body with his knowledge very much clouded and bliss distorted with miseries in the state of Samsāra. But he regains his original nature as the Reflection of God when he is freed from Avidyā and involvement in Samsāra by the grace of God. Neither Prakṛti nor the Jīvas lose their pristine nature in spite of the changes of the superficial characteristics added to them in the creative process. When Madhva speaks of Creation and of God as the Great Creator, he means that He generates these changes producing new characteristics of a temporary nature without impairment to the basic nature of the substances which are co-eval with him. This doctrine has been misinterpreted by Prof. Raghavendrachar. When Madhva has established Bheda (difference) as an

ultimate category, and insists on Pañca-bheda (five-fold differences) as the nature of Reality, it is nothing less of an absurdity to maintain that eternal substances are also generated by Him and are not co-eval with Him.

The Question of Creation Out of Nothing

There is another allied question regarding God's creatorship and that is with reference to His Omnipotence. Will not the Omnipotence of God be demonstrated better if He were the creator of everything, including the so called eternal entities, out of nothing, from non-existence? Madhva, along with all other Indian thinkers, does not accept such a hypothesis. Though theoretically he accepts even such a power in that Independent and Omnipotent Being, God has set a self-limitation on Himself and has chosen the way of eternal creation with eternal entities co-existing with Himself by His own will.

The theory of creation out of 'nothing' while it demonstrates the absolute omnipotence of God, will give rise to more logical and metaphysical problems than what it solves. It will entail a beginning and probably an end for time, which are inconceivable. The question of God's status and nature before He started this creative activity, involving evil and suffering, will arise. Is He God first and next creator, or is He God and creator simultaneously? The answer will settle the question. Besides, to say that He created out of 'nothing' implies that there is 'nothing' besides Him and He brings out everything and sustains them by His will. Is not the idea of eternal sustenance and direction of the universe by His will enough to demonstrate His omnipotence? Should He for this behave like a tribal chief or 'oriental monarch', the demonstration of whose whims and caprices is the sign of his absolute power? The majesty and excellence of God is far better served by the theory of eternal creation with entities co-eval with Him and subsisting by His will than by conceiving creation as a result of a whim of His.

So Prakṛti, Jīvas and the other eternal categories are collectively and in every detail under His absolute control eternally, and the creative process consists only in the generation of certain temporary characteristics in eternal substances, and in causing the eternally succeeding cycles of projection and dissolution necessary for the fructification of the tendencies (Karma) of Jīvas involved in the process. The world systems, with their fourteen planes (Brahmāṇḍas) are countless, and He supports and controls them all in every detail by pervading them with an Amśa (fraction) of His potency.

If there is purpose for the creative process, it is the fructification of the Karma of Jīvas who are countless in number. Their essential nature of consciousness and bliss is covered up by the mist of Avidyā (ignorance). They attain to higher and higher evolution through the attainment of better and better body-minds suited for the adoration of the Divine until they finally obtain liberation through the grace of God. The creative process aids this bestowal of grace in Jīvas and their release from Samsāra.

Attributes of Brahman

Madhva stoutly denies that the Brahman is two-tiered — Nirguṇa and Nirviśeṣa (Attributeless Absolute) from the Paramārtha (metaphysical) point of view, and Saguṇa (with attributes) from the Vyavahāra (practical) level. There are no doubt passages in the Upaniṣads which refer to Him as Nirguṇa while at the same time there are others describing Him as possessed of many auspicious attributes (Saguṇa). For example there is a famous passage which speaks of Him as Sākṣī (witness) Cetā (conscious) and Nirguṇa (without Guṇa). There are other passages in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad which describe Him as 'All-action, All-desire, All-odour, All-taste, All-pervading, without speech, without perturbation, etc.' Further He is depicted as: 'He is great, Divine and of such a form that is beyond comprehension'. The Advaita way of reconciling this dichotomy is to assert

that all positive attributes such as those mentioned above are descriptions of Lower (Saguṇa) Brahman, and to maintain that wherever attributelessness occurs, it is reference to Nirguṇa the Higher Brahman. These are not irreconcilable if interpreted in the light of the Mīmāṃsa rules of Vedic exegesis. In the eye of theists the Advaitic way of resolving the apparent contradiction by positing two Brahman — a Higher Brahman who is attributeless (Nirguṇa) and a Lower Brahman (Saguṇa or Īśvara) — militates against the very conception of Brahman. Brahman is the one being to whom there is no equal or superior. So to think of a higher or a lower in regard to Him is absurd. Brahman, who is identical with Viṣṇu, is full of auspicious attributes. Where He is described as Nirguṇa and Nirviśeṣa, it means only that nothing about Him is a product of Guṇas or constituents of Prakṛti (material nature); and that His form, qualities, powers etc., are not of a material character as known to us. They are transcendental and spiritual. The human way of describing is used, because it is the only way available to us. It is a complete denial of anthropomorphism.

Brahman's first and foremost attribute is absolute independence. As there is none equal or superior to Him, He is not under any one's control. The Śrutis therefore speak of Him as the one without a second — *ekam evādvitīyam*. He is both immanent in all beings and transcends them too. He controls and directs them in all the eight transformations of the creative process. All the other entities, eternal and non-eternal, exist supported by His will. There is nothing past and present and future that does not come within His consciousness, and nothing that His will does not give existential value (Satta) and does not manipulate. This implies that He is omnipotent and omniscient and all-pervading. Though He resides in everything and directs them, He is unaffected and unsullied. He is Amala or one without any impurity.

His creatorship in itself is not of much significance to the Jīva who is involved in the turmoils of Samsāra, the cycle or repetitive births and deaths. He is more significant to the Jīva as the one who distributes to him welfare and suffering according to the efficiencies of his Karmas. His inconceivable power (Acintya-śakti) known as Māyā functions in two ways. It performs all the cosmic activities of creation, sustentation, and dissolution. It also covers up the spiritual nature of Jīvas and involves them in Samsāra. And it is He alone that at the maturity of the Jīva's evolution, bestows His grace on Him and lifts him from Samsāra. He is thus the Redeemer who sheds His grace on the devotee. Grace is thus one of His most important attributes, making Him very significant to the Jīva. He alone can break the bonds of Karma and deliver the Jīva from Samsāra, because even bondage has been imposed by Him on the Jīvas. In fact the creatorship of Brahman implies that He is the master of the eight cosmic processes — creation, sustentation, dissolution, control, enlightenment, obscuration, bondage and release.

Madhva specially stresses the idea that God is the quintessence of all perfection and is free from all imperfections. All other beings are subject to imperfections. The imperfections are ignorance, dependence on other imperfect and limited beings, liability to misery, material embodiment and equality or inferiority to others. The Supreme Being is free from all these.

He is Satyam (Truth) Jñānam (Knowledge) and Ānandam (Bliss) in an infinite degree (Anantam). These are not only His attributes, but also His very form. He is identical with Himself, His attributes and His actions. Then when He is spoken of as a Person it is to be specially remembered that He is not one among many embodied beings. He is not a material form at all. He is a Transcendental Being who is indestructible and unchanging and is an embodiment of consciousness and bliss. His nature

as bliss makes Him the source of all beauty. His countless divine forms are all soul-stirring. Thus the poet's conception 'Truth is beauty, beauty truth' is fulfilled in Him. It is from Him that all values gain their substantiality. His nature and essence are identical. His attributes are countless. The six attributes that are generally associated with His designation as Bhagavān are each an abbreviated formula of numerous attributes coming under it. Many contrary attributes also can simultaneously manifest in Him. For example, His anger towards Hiranyakaśipu manifests simultaneously with His gracious love for his devotee son Prahlāda. But thanks to His Acintya-sākti or unimaginable super-power, contradictory characteristics like minuteness and enormity, lightness and heaviness, to be known and to be unknown, can all co-exist in him without contradiction. So it is said in the Upaniṣads; 'Aṇor aṇīyān mahato mahīyān. *Ātmāsya janitor nihito guhāyām* — smaller than an atom and bigger than the biggest, this Ātman resides in the cavity of the heart of beings.' He can be the creator and destroyer at the same time.

Prakṛti and Other Entities

In the Fivefold Difference (Pañca-bheda) of Mādhva philosophy three entities are involved — Brahman, Prakṛti and Jīva. As described earlier, the eternal relation between these three entities is the *pra-pañca* — the uniquely five. Prakṛti is primordial Matter, different from, and coeval with, Brahman. But none the less it subsists absolutely by His will, and functions energised by that will in every detail.

Madhva stoutly supports its dependence on Brahman as against the Sāṅkhyas, and on its ultimacy as against Advaitins. The Sāṅkhyan Prakṛti is not only different from the multiplicity of Puruṣas, but is also an absolutely independent entity. It is dynamic in itself, has the three Guṇas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas as its constituents and functions in the cyclic order of manifestation and dissolution

endlessly, entangling as also releasing the Puruṣas in its evolutionary process according to the Karma efficiencies of these Jīvas. Madhva rejects such a theory which has no place for God as the all-controlling principle. Though he accepts the twentyfour Sāṅkhyan evolutionary categories that come out of Prakṛti, he maintains that Prakṛti in itself has no dynamism or power to fructify the Karmas of Jīvas. Though coeval with Brahman as an eternal substance (Padārtha), it is only by Brahman's will that it subsists, and it is absolutely dependent on Him and it functions by His energy in every detail.

For the Advaitins, the experience of the world is only a provisional (Vyāvahārika) reality which will be sublated when the ultimate metaphysical Truth (Paramārtha) is realised. And for explaining the Vyāvahāric experience, they formulate a new category of Sad-asad-anirvacanīya, which means that it is indeterminable as it is at the same time existent and non-existent.

How the Mādhvas meet such a position has already been explained in discussing their theory of knowledge, and what is said below may be to some extent a repetition. The experience of a Paramārtha state is rejected or explained away by them. There is no way of disproving what is called the Vyāvahārika (provisional) experience of the world. It is the universal experience of all humanity. In such a situation, to bring in the analogy of Pratibhāsika or temporary illusions of life like snake in the rope as an illustration to disprove it, will be like tying the cart before the horse. To describe the Vyāvahārika experience as both Sat and Asat is unacceptable, as it will be mutually contradictory. Besides to describe the world experience as a mere appearance (Pratibhāsa), a real world elsewhere has to be assumed as a proto-type. By giving up the idea of illusion and making the world experience a new category which is both Sat (existent) and Asat (non-existent) and therefore Anirvacanīya, indeterminable as one or the other,

will not save the situation. For Sat and Asat are logical contradictories with the middle ground excluded. To further call it Anirvacanīya or indeterminable, may make the categorisation appear dignified but it cannot make it maintainable. If the idea is that, if something that is not definable in the ways we adopt, must be branded as false, the reply is that new ways of defining should be found out. Rejection of something certified by other ways of knowing, because it is not amenable to one's false logic, is not justified. In the field of sense perception, reasoning can only correct distortions and not eliminate the basic facts contacted.

Sublation of the world experience is impossible, because sublation is relevant only in regard to a non-existent entity. When the illusion of silver in nacre is sublated, we say, 'The silver supposed to be perceived is not there'. The world experience, is the universal experience of all mankind, and it is what makes even the philosophising activity of the Advaitin possible. Besides it is certified by the Sākṣī, the ultimate criterion of certitude and cannot be subject sublation for all these reasons. It may be changing, but change is not sublation. The water in a river is constantly changing; we do not say that the receding volume of water is being sublated by the oncoming volume. Being in the frame-work of time and space is the criterion of Yathārtham — facts as they are. The world experience satisfies this. It satisfies also the two other criteria of reality generally accepted. The fact of world experience largely corresponds to the idea we have of it. It also satisfies the test of Arthakriyā-kāritva or practical efficiency. There is no need, Mādhvites say, for them to prove such an obvious fact as the reality of the world. They need only show the invalidity of the questions raised by those who do not accept it.

Further it is argued by Advaitins that Dr̥śyatva or perceivability is the nature of what is Mithyā or false. The Mādhvites point out that this is a double-edged sword which

can destroy the Advaitic position too. Advaitins maintain that experience is their conclusive proof of Paramārtha. If the Dvaita experience is false because it is a perceived experience the same may be said of the Advaitin's perceived experience of the Paramārtha. Experience always requires an experiencer and the experienced. To deny this is as irrational as saying that there can be a line without an A and B.

The Advaitins maintain that the experience of the Paramārtha is attained when there is Akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti or the unmodified mode of the mind. This too is a Vṛtti or mode of the mind like the modes taken by the mind in the perception of the world. This Akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti may infinitely continue, but it can only continue as a mental mode which must have a form. If it is maintained that it subsides after having produced the Advaita experience, that experience too must disappear with it. Two alternatives are then left. All the old mental Vṛttis may come back, or consciousness itself may be destroyed leaving a Nihil as the residue, if it may be called so at all. All such arguments based on experience are futile in disproving the reality of the world experience.

Finally there is the question of scriptural evidence. The Veda is accepted by all Vedāntins as the authority on spiritual matters and the Upaniṣads are looked upon as the Vedānta or the purport of the Veda. In the Upaniṣads there are passages which speak of Brahman creating the world with countless Jīvas and of being endowed with innumerable auspicious attributes. There are others which apparently deny all attributes in Him and the creation of the manifold universe. The differing perceptions of these by the Advaitins and the Dvaitins have already been discussed under the heading 'scriptural authority'. The Advaitins look upon the scriptural texts on the manifold world and on its creation by Īśvara only as a restatement of the commonplace view of it in order to deny it by the non-dualistic passages or

Abheda-śrutis, and thereby reveal a new phase of reality inaccessible to any other means. This revelation of a new truth, not open to other means of knowledge, is the special function of scriptures. Dvaitins counter this, maintaining that facts are not as Advaitins contend. The certain knowledge about Īśvara, who is also the great creator, is gained only from the scripture and is therefore new in a way. The ontological, cosmological and other arguments can at the most suggest the possibility of one or a committee of creators or at best a Demiurge. It is the scripture that gives us a sure understanding of His existence, attributes and creative activities. The Vedic passages that give this can in no way be brushed aside as a scapegoat or lame duck for Abheda-śrutis to fire at and assert their supremacy. These dualistic passages are the basis or supporting factors or the Upajīvyā-śrutis according to the Mīmāṃsa rules of interpreting Vedic passages. The Abheda-śrutis are only based on them as explanatory. In the language of the Mīmāṃsaka way of exegesis they are Upajīvaka, the supported or the sustained passages. If they are interpreted as demolishing the supporting (Upajīvyā) passages, they also collapse simultaneously and only a Nihil (nothing) is left. So the Advaitin's way of interpreting is self-destructive.

Madhva has therefore interpreted all such passages in the light of his dualistic doctrine of reality as constituted of the Independent Being and the Dependent Beings. The rules of Vedic exegesis permit non-literal interpretation wherever it is needed for a rational understanding, as many Vedic passages are couched in mystic, figurative and analogical forms. For example there is the Vedic passage, 'The handful of grass is the sacrifice.' If this is literally interpreted, it will be an absurd proposition, as it goes against the knowledge we have through sense perception. The same kind of absurdity we will get if passages that state 'All this is Brahman' or 'That thou art' are literally interpreted. The reality of the many as different from Brahman is gained by sense perception, and the difference

of oneself — a petty, short-lived and precariously conscious being — is intuitively understood as different from the Omnipotent and Omniscient Creator. Such knowledge is confirmed by what is called in Madhva's system as the Sākṣī, a concept that has already been discussed in detail in a section under that heading. It is the energy of the soul that ultimately gives certitude to knowledge that is gained through any of the Pramāṇas (ways of knowing), be it perception, reasoning, or scripture. If the Sākṣī is denied, even the scriptures will give no certitude. For if the function of this energy of the soul is eliminated, only Buddhi (intellect) of the psycho-physical organism is left to give certitude. But the very nature of the Buddhi is to suggest the pros and cons and produce endless doubts. Thus if the certitude-generating Sākṣī is denied, there can be no science or philosophy or any well-established pattern of knowledge.

So the well-established knowledge gained through the experience of the Sākṣī about the world and the general understanding about God and soul cannot be contradicted by the scriptures, as sense perception is superior in its own field. Wherever there are such scriptural passages, they have to be taken as mystic and metaphorical, and interpreted in that light and not literally. So Śrī Madhvācārya has interpreted, in the light of this theory, the Brahma-sūtras, many of the Upaniṣads, the Gītā, Pañcarātra, Mahābhārata etc., in accordance with the doctrine of Pañca-bheda or the fivefold differences.

Space and Time

The next most important ontological category is the Jīva. Before that is taken up, a short account of two other categories not mentioned before, but none the less important, have to be considered. These are space and time (Ākāśa and Kāla). Madhva makes a difference between two kinds of Ākāśa — the Avyākṛtākāśa or the uncreated eternal

and unmodified space, and Ākāśa forming one of the five elements evolved out of Prakṛti. The former i.e. the Avyākṛtākāśa and Time (Kāla) are co-eval with Brahman like Prakṛti and the Jīva. They are infinite as no one can imagine a limit for them, as our thought is incapable of conceiving anything beyond them as their antecedents. Space contains everything and makes movements possible. It is not movement that makes us aware of space as some think. We are aware of space first and through it movement. Time conditions and regulates the generating growth and dissolution of everything. Both unmodified space and time are not perceived through any of the sense organs but by the Sākṣī, the intuitive power of the Ātman, directly. It is said by some philosophers that we cannot know bare time as we cannot perceive mere duration. This objection rests on the assumption that the concept of time rests exclusively on our waking experience. Indian thought, however, takes all the states, waking, dream and deep sleep, in arriving at a world-view. In deep sleep when all the senses and mind are absolutely at abeyance, the Sākṣī intuits bare ego, bare time and bare bliss. As no sense experience is there, it cannot be an ordinary perception and for that reason, not an inference. The evidence of Sākṣī alone certifies it. Both time and space are infinite but also infinitely divisible. Their experience is also a proof of the concept of Sākṣī.

Jīva or Individual Soul

The individual self, known as Ātman and Jīva, is as basic a concept in theistic Vedānta as that of Īśvara, the Lord of the Universe. In Madhva's system the Jīva is defined as that centre of I-sense which is endowed with consciousness and will — the powers to know, to act and to enjoy. It is intuited by the Sākṣī as distinct from the body and mind. Though there is the above described commonality of character among all Jīvas, every one of them is distinctly unique. Thus while they form a numerical

multiplicity, it is a multiplicity with individuals having distinct features which are never repeated. For numerical multiplicity without qualitative multiplicity is no multiplicity at all.

Every Jīva is in essence a distinct being with limited consciousness and bliss but the measure of these in each one of them varies. As a consequence there is a hierarchy of Jīvas, each with its own uniqueness which holds good both in bondage and liberation. This is an important point on which Madhva's realistic doctrine differs sharply from that of Rāmānuja. In the latter's system, except in respect of the Nitya-Vibhūtis (the eternal companions of the Lord), all Jīvas are, in their essence, a uniform type of conscious monads. It may be asked, as regards Madhva's system, how we know that in liberation also distinctiveness of features persists. In reply it is said that the veil of ignorance hides our full knowledge of this transcendental fact. Only from the scriptures we get clear understanding of it. We can however get a hint about it otherwise also in our everyday life. Our inner experience is one's own and cannot be mutually entered into, except to some extent when communicated. This can be taken as a pointer to the difference and distinctiveness of every Jīva in all conditions.

The Ātman is self-luminous. In the Advaita the self-luminosity of the Ātman means that it is a subject-objectless entity — Pure Consciousness without being a subject that is a knower and an object that is known. Madhva rejects such a concept as meaningless, as an entity without a subjective or objective reference will only be a non-luminous one, equivalent to Nihil. The Ātman is self-luminous in the sense that it is a knower with an inherent capacity to know itself as well as others. But this capacity, though inherent in it, is derived from the only Independent Being, the Para-Brahman. Being a Reflection (Pratibimba) of God, the Jīva gets a very faint colouring of some of His attributes like self-luminosity and bliss. But from the endless past it is covered up by Avidyā or ignorance

of its real relationship with Brahman, and as a consequence it is filled with a false sense of independence. The real nature of the Jīva is dependence on Brahman, the only Independent Being. This dependence is obvious when we think of our pre-natal state, helplessness of infancy and childhood and what is in store for one after death. It is only a wise Providence that has provided for our preservation and development. We have no power of ours otherwise. Even in sleep and swoon it is so. Only in the intervening period we feel we are free, independent beings with powers of our own. This false sense of independence is the effect of Avidyā and it is what constitutes bondage.

Concept of Avidyā or Ignorance

The concept of Avidyā in the Dvaita philosophy must be clearly distinguished from the Avidyā of the Advaitin, the locus of which is impossible to determine. One may say that the locus is in the Jīva, but as the Jīva is one with Brahman according to the Advaitin, this assumption is as good as Avidyā being in Brahman. Brahman will thus become the centre of all corruption. This they do not, however, admit. They deny the ultimacy of Avidyā and take shelter under the two tier theory of Paramārtha and Vyavahāra. It is however admitted that the origin of Avidyā is beyond our understanding, and that the mystery is solved only when one transcends Avidyā.

In the Dvaita philosophy, Avidyā has its locus only in the Jīva. So their theory of Avidyā is called Svabhāvājñāna-vada, which means the forgetfulness of the Jīva's true nature and of his dependence on God. It is induced in them by the Independent Being, God. As the Jīva is different from Brahman, Avidyā located in the Jīva does not affect Him as in Advaita. Though located in the Jīva, it is not natural to him. For being an eternal category and a reflection (Pratibimba) of God, the Jīva's existentiality and self-consciousness are retained, but his

blissful nature is gravely clouded and bodily identification is generated.

As the Jīva is coeval with God, one cannot say when he came to be invested with Avidyā. But as in the Dvaita philosophy, God is independent and everything including the Jīva are under His control, the philosophers of that system readily grant that the Jīva has come to be clouded with ignorance due to the will of God from beginningless time. It is His will, and it cannot be questioned. This is no better answer than the Advaitin's admission that he does not know how and when Avidyā came into operation. But while the Advaitins' theory invests Brahman Himself with the taint of Avidyā, the worst that can be said of Dvaitin's God is that He is a beneficent despot. He should be called 'beneficent' because He out of His grace can efface the Jīva's ignorance, restore him to his true nature as a Pratibimba (Reflection) and release him from Samsāra, the cycle of births and deaths occurring according to his beginningless load of Karma. For the question why should God adopt this painful way for release, there is no answer beyond reference to His will and pleasure. One theory propounded is the theory of Līlā — playful exuberance. It is an overflow of His bliss, just as one expresses one's ecstasy through a dance. The meaning of such a theory is that He, being Āptakāma or one whose wants are already fulfilled, has no purpose of His own in creative activity. But none the less a purpose is served through it as far as the Jīvas are concerned. But for this creative process they could never get release from the load of Karma. Passing through the cyclic occurrence of births and deaths accompanied with enjoyments and sufferings, those who are fit for liberation gradually begin to appreciate spiritual values, develop non-attachment, take to devotional studies and discipline, and become eligible for God's grace.

Plurality of Jīvas

Jīvas are countless, and both in bondage and liberation each Jīva keeps up his difference from others both in

individuality and character. In most of the other systems of Vedānta it is not so. Rāmānuja admits plurality of souls in both bondage and liberation but denies qualitative difference in the state of release. Qualitative differences exist only in bondage when the Jīva identifies itself with its psycho-physical limitations. Liberated, all Jīvas are uniform centres of unlimited consciousness and bliss. In Advaita, Jīvahood itself disappears in release when the Jīva realises his identity with Brahman.

In Madhva's rigorously realistic philosophy, the difference in the number and characters of the Jīvas has ultimacy. In our earthly life we find every person has a uniqueness of his own in spite of similarity with others. Even in a herd of sheep the shepherd is able to distinguish each from the others, though all look alike to the unfamiliar eye. While mere numerical plurality is possible in material agglomerations, it cannot be true of conscious entities which are shaped into what they are by their own actions (Karmas). But the difference in the character of the Jīvas in bondage as well as liberation cannot be explained away by the doctrines of beginningless Karma (Anādi-karma) alone. The beginninglessness of Karma cannot in itself explain why, if the Jīvas are basically alike and free, and had presumably a simultaneous start, they chose to perform works which generate dissimilar and even opposite kinds of results and character patterns. The rigorous logic of Madhva finds an explanation for this in the intrinsic difference in the spiritual essence itself of all Jīvas. It is this difference that accounts for the performance of actions leading to the accumulation of different types of Karma patterns by each Jīva, leading to variations in enjoyments and sufferings and character traits in his life in Samsāra. That basic or innate nature will persist in the state of liberation also. Madhva calls this Svarūpa-bheda (difference of a basic nature) of Jīvas and claims that it alone can accommodate the Jīvas' numerical plurality with their qualitative diversity and freedom of will.

The Doctrine of Svarūpa-tāratamya of Jīvas

From the idea of the uniqueness of each Jīva, their gradation and classification into three groups logically follows. As a reflection (Pratibimba) of Brahman every Jīva has in him a modicum of Brahman's essential features — Truth (Satyam), Consciousness (Jñānam) and Bliss (Ānanda). But due to their own intrinsic capacities, they share these characteristics in varying degrees only. They all alike have a dependent existence, but their capacity to know vastly varies and their joy much more so. In the state of bondage, the differences in the nature of Karma clouding them can easily account for this variation in their intelligence, joy and misery. According to Madhva, in liberation also this variation exists. In Rāmānuja's system, the Jīva in liberation attains to equality with Brahman in knowledge and bliss, but not in power, as Brahman alone has the power of creation. Madhva rejects such a theory on the ground that variations in Jīvas in bondage remains unexplained under this theory. Karma alone cannot explain it, because as has already been explained, there must be in that case, absolute equality among them in bondage too. An initial intrinsic difference alone can account for variations in bondage, and this must of necessity be extended to the state of liberation too. This difference consists in the basic potencies inherent in their very being. To say that the insignificant Jīva on attaining liberation through the grace of God gets elevated to His own status in knowledge and bliss is only a little less blasphemous than the Advaitic doctrine of the Jīva becoming one with Him. So Madhva maintains that the uniqueness of each Jīva, obvious in bondage, persists in their liberated state also. This is very essential for his theory of Pañca-bheda, the fivefold difference, according to which each Jīva is different from every other entity including all Jīvas. This difference is fully secured only if the difference is both quantitative and qualitative also. So as in bondage so in liberation too there are various gradations in respect of knowledge and joy of each Jīva. This doctrine of

variation in the very nature of Jīvas is technically known as Svarūpa-tāratamya.

The Doctrine of Traividhyam

Svarūpa-tāratamya easily leads to what is known as Traividhyam or distinction of Jīvas in Samsāra into three types — Mukti-yogyas (the salvable), Nitya-samsārins (the eternally transmigrating) and Tamo-yogyas (the damnable). Tamo-yogyas are positively evil in nature and wallow in sin. They are devils in human form and go to perdition. The Mukti-yogyas are Jīvas who are receptive to spiritual values, and through repeated embodiments they evolve into better and better men, and finally through concentrated spiritual disciplines and God's grace gain salvation. The Nitya-samsārins are worldlings who delight only in worldly values and feel no need for ethical and spiritual life. Reaping the fruits of their own actions they pass through births and deaths eternally. But the Tamo-yogyas who are positively evil by nature, go on degenerating more and more by their indulgence in evil actions, until the accumulated load of sins finally leads them to eternal perdition.

A theory of this type has attracted the severest criticism on Mādhvism even from those who are receptive to its teachings in other respects. But the Mādhvas contend that sentiment apart, rigorous logic requires this in a doctrine of strict theism like theirs. It is their solution for the problem of evil in the world, which no Vedāntic or other system of spiritual philosophy has been able to solve. If it is excusable to make a humorous remark on this grave problem, the Mādhva philosophers think that it is better to consign a section of Jīvas to damnation than to make God damnable.

Dr. B.N.K. Śarma, who is one of the most learned and lucid writers in English on Mādhvaism, has dealt with this question in detail in his book on the Philosophy of Śrī Mādhva. His arguments are summarised here. The criticism

of this Mādhva doctrine of Svarūpa-trividhya (the differentiation of Jīvas into three groups on the basis of their inherent difference) is largely based on the confused identification of it with the theory of Election which dogmatically asserts that God creates souls along with the origin of their bodies, pre-destining some of them to eternal damnation arbitrarily, without any consideration of their nature. This is mainly the form that Calvinistic doctrine of pre-destination takes. The Mādhva doctrine is the antipode of it, because it is the Svarūpa, the nature of some Jīvas, that leads to their damnation.

Fraser in his Gifford Lectures on the Philosophy of Theism has discussed the problem of evil more or less on Mādhva lines. There are three possible ways in which solutions have been attempted 1) The Zoroastrian dualistic way, positing a God (Ahura) representing the forces of good and an opposing force of evil (Ahrimān). One has sufficient reason to doubt which force will finally succeed. 2) An imperfect Deity. 3) A Monism which holds that the universal Power is a mixture of good and evil or otherwise indifferent to both. All these clash with the theistic faith and moral hope. Several others have been attempted describing evil as mere negation, as an unconditional necessity of finite existence, or as the work of a Tempter.

Then Fraser gives his own view, that God admits into His scheme what is evil, and that this is an improved assumption. The assumption in the other ways of thinking is that what *should not exist* cannot co-exist with God. Moral law assumes free will to the agents involved, and freedom to will means freedom to do what is according to one's choice, be it good or evil, in spite of Divine Omnipotence. For, omnipotence is not the power to realize contradictions. Such a demand does not contribute to Divine majesty and perfection but only condemns Him to be a being delighting in chaos. So assuming that there are agents of evil co-existing with God, agents uncreated by Him, we may

envisage two possibilities: it may be a transitory episode in the history of the universe, or there may be an ever-increasing number of such persons with ever-increasing viciousness of their evil disposition. A third alternative is that such persons and their actions are liable to destruction by God, and they are reduced to unconscious entities.

It is doubtful whether this theory of Fraser is any better than the Zoroastrian idea of an Ahura and an Ahrimān representing the good and evil forces and the former ultimately triumphing over the latter. In the Mādhva idea of basically evil Jīvas, the Tamo-yogyas, come to self-destruction by their own innate nature and not by a fiat of God. The Christian idea that Jīvas are created with the body cannot entertain this idea. But the Mādhva doctrine of uncreated and co-existent Jīvas can give a more rational account consistent with the theistic majesty of God. Tamo-yogyas are fit only to be effaced as conscious beings, which means they are reduced to inertness. It is doubtful whether they are condemned into an eternal hell, which no Indian ideology supports. Naraka of Indian scripture is not equivalent to the hell of Christian ideology. Naraka is only a purgatory where the Jīva gets purified of sin by sufferings. Eventually even they are raised from that state on their purification. Even Mukti-yogyas (eligible for Mukti) and Nitya-samsāris (ever transmigrating ones) can experience Naraka for expiation.

To be reduced into an inert substance is the worst fate that can befall a Jīva. The Jīva by nature is a Pratibimba of God and reflects in himself some of His essential nature, however imperfectly it be. Of existence, knowledge and bliss which are at their perfection in God, the Jīva shares His existence, while his knowledge is very much shrunk and his bliss marred by intense forms of misery. The Mukti-yogyas are those eligible for liberation. They gradually regain their full share of consciousness and bliss when by purifications and the grace of God they become eligible

for liberation. But the capacity and measure of power and bliss in each Jīva varies even in liberation according to the theory of Tāratamya (gradation). The Nitya-samsāris or worldlings, ever entrenched in their sense of independence and worldly attachments, go through the succession of birth and death eternally. The Tamo-yogyas who are basically evil wallow in sin until whatever capacity of consciousness and bliss there is in them is completely effaced and they are reduced to inertness characteristic of material substances. Matter like Jīva is also a substance co-existent with God and subject to His absolute control. So the complete effacement of the specific characteristic of the Jīva and reducing it to mere existentiality must be the meaning of perdition for the Tamo-yogyas. This is not the view of orthodox Mādhvites. It is stated in the interpretation of the Brahma Sūtras that the Tamo-yogyas are finally cast into the Narakas known as Tāmisra (the region of darkness) and Andha-tāmisra (the region of blinding darkness), from which they have no way of redemption. Untold misery for all time is their fate. There is however some difficulty in accepting this literally, even apart from any sentimental objection. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa describes twenty eight Narakas and the tortures to which sinners are put in them. In this list of twenty eight Narakas Tāmisra and Andha-tāmisra head the list, and the sufferings in these end in complete swoon, which is necessarily a state of un-consciousness — a state equivalent to reduction to matter. As for the other Narakas, the sufferings are much more intense and the sinners are conscious. No distinction is made with regard to all these Narakas, including the first two, in their function. It is only purgation and not eternal confinement. Naraka is therefore entirely different from the eternal Hell of Christianity. They are only purgatories, from which they are released to take new embodiments after they have atoned for their sins by suffering. The acceptance of such an interpretation becomes difficult, as there is the hurdle of the Pañca-bheda theory, according to which the difference between Jīva and Jada is absolute.

The Mādhva scholars have shown that this theory is not merely a speculative innovation of theirs but one having the support of the scriptures. Dr. B.N.K. Śarma gives twenty three quotations from the Vedas, Gītā, Purāṇas and Pañcarātra texts. It is also pointed out that this division of Jīvas into three types is not based on the familiar three Guṇas of Prakṛti. It is determined by the basic nature (Sattva) of the Jīvas who are different from Prakṛti in the light of the Pañca-bheda theory. The three Guṇas are on the other hand parts of Prakṛti.

The Mādhvite Solution of the Problem of Evil

The Mādhvites consider this theory of basically evil Jīvas as very essential for true theism. According to them this is the only solution for the problem of evil. The various theories about this problem have already been pointed out in the summary of Fraser's views. If evil is not attributed to the Jīvas, it will have to be attributed to God Himself. That will mark the doom of theism. Rāmānuja tries to solve the problem by attributing all evil to the accumulation of evil Karma of Jīvas and maintains that God is Amala (without any stain of evil). But Madhva, as already shown in explaining the doctrine of Tāratamya (gradation), thinks that Karma will not take us to the root of the problem. Even if Karma is accepted as beginningless, it is reasonable to seek for a root cause for its variation in quality. Unless such a root cause is accepted, we have to conceive the Karmas of all Jīvas as running parallel from contiguous points having the same quality. This is not the case, for if it were so there should have been no variations in Karma. One is therefore forced to trace it to the basic nature (the Sattva) of the Jīvas themselves. The accumulation of evil in the world must be due to the performance of Jīvas under the prompting of their basic nature, the totally sinful ones contributing the major share of it. God has no responsibility for it. The Jīvas are not His creations, as in the Christian doctrine. They are entities co-existent with Him but

absolutely under His control. The control He exercises does not abrogate or interfere with the freedom of will of the Jīvas. Without accepting this freedom, morality has no leg to stand upon. Theoretically an omnipotent God must have power to do anything. That does not mean that He should indulge in whimsical antics and feats of surprising contradictions. The majesty of the Divine, His worshipful nature, is made manifest more through enforcing a rule of law and in accordance with the deserts of Jīvas giving them full freedom to follow their own nature. So God through self-limitation of His omnipotence, functions as the Anumantā the sanctioner, and the Jīvas are free to work according to their innate nature and their accumulated Karma, good and bad. The conception of the sanctioner implies that the ultimate power for everything comes from God only, and the Jīva utilises that power according to the Karmas generated by his innate nature. To illustrate it by an imperfect analogy, in a factory the power comes from the power house, but the various cogs move in the direction in which they are set. No charge of partiality and cruelty can therefore be brought against God. The Jīva himself is an actor in the sense described, and he is the enjoyer of the fruits of his actions. The presence of good and evil is thus entirely traceable to the Jīvas in the light of the theory of Svarūpa-tāratamya and the threefold grouping of Jīvas. When Tamo-yogyas multiply inordinately, evil must increase geometrically. But the theory that it will ultimately lead to their doom, by which we have to understand their confinement to eternal hell or reduction to inanimateness, gives the hope that this geometrical increase will not happen as they will also be progressively going out of the ring.

The Pratibimba Theory of Jīvas

The relation between the Jīva and the Supreme Being is one of the cardinal points with which all schools of Vedānta philosophies are concerned. The Upaniṣads

describe it by several symbolic expressions like Rūpa-prati-rūpa (an original and its reflection), Amśāmsī (the whole and the part), Chāyā-puruṣa (a person and his shadow), Śarīra-śarīrī (body and soul), Ābhāsa (a reflected entity), Agni-visphuliṅga (fire and sparks from it) etc. Among Vedāntic systems, the Advaita describes it in two ways — as an entity resulting from the super-imposition of an adjunct on a substratum, namely Brahman, and as a reflection in Upādhi like the sun's disc in dishes of water. Whatever the symbols used, it has no individuality of any kind when liberation is attained. The Viśiṣṭādvaita, characterises the relation as Śarīra-śarīrī, meaning the soul and body, and God as his Indwelling Self, and as Śeṣa-śeṣī, meaning the Remainder (slave) and Master. Here the Jīva continues to retain his individuality in liberation also.

Of all descriptions, Madhva prefers Bimba-pratibimba relation, which means that God is the Original and Jīva is His Reflection. His characterization of Reality as a duality of one Independent Being and of beings Dependent but coexisting with Him, necessitates a symbolic description conveying both these ideas. It is also necessary for his theory to secure the individualized existence of the Jīva in bondage as also in liberation. So his reflection theory has to be quite different from that of the Advaitin, in which the reflection is in an Upādhi (adjunct) as the medium. With the destruction of the Upādhi, the Jīva, which is a reflection in it, will be destroyed. The Advaitin will say not 'destroyed' but attains oneness with the sun whose ray it was in the reflected state. Such a relapse, the Madhvites will say, must be described as 'destruction', as the Jīva ceases to exist. If that is the end of all spiritual endeavour, it is not worth undertaking; for, 'self-destruction' would be the goal to which it takes an aspirant.

This defect, the Mādhvites think, can be overcome only by their theory of reflection without the external medium of an Upādhi for explaining the nature of the Jīva. This

looks like an absurdity at first sight, but according to the Mādhvites, it is not so. It is only the sensible way of understanding the nature of the Jīva. Even Rāmānuja's theory is not adequate to show the absolute dependence and the conscious and blissful nature of the Jīva. Only the Pratibimba theory can do this.

The Mādhvas contend that the vulgar earthly idea of a reflecting medium should not be brought against this doctrine. Analogies do not go on all fours. They are relevant only so far as they illustrate the particular points involved. The statement that 'He is a lion among men' means only that he is brave like a lion. Besides the expression 'Pratibimba' (reflection) is used in a symbolic and metaphysical sense. It shows only that Jīvas are absolutely dependent entities sharing some of the characteristics of their Original, Īśvara. A reflection has no existence apart from its Original. Only we have to understand, that in this case, it is reflection given in reality without an external reflector. The reflection idea is given to emphasise the absolute dependence of the Jīva on God. A reflection also has some of the characteristics of its Original. The Jīva fulfils this condition too. He is existent like Īśvara. Being a self-conscious entity, he has a modicum of the universal consciousness of the Supreme. And as an experiencer of a misery-masked and turbid drop of joy, he is also a sharer of the overflowing Bliss of Brahman. While the Jīva's conscious and blissful nature are very much shrunken in bondage due to the oppressive influence of Karma, in liberation they develop to full capacity. But even in liberation there is no equality with Brahman, whose minute fraction alone he is. He can have knowledge and bliss only according to his inherent capacity, and therefore every Jīva retains his difference from every other Jīva and Īśvara.

There is another line of thinking also in respect of the question of Upādhi. The self-existent nature of the Jīva itself can be taken as the Upādhi. This is technically known

as Svarūpo' pādhi. To be told merely that the Jīva is existent, conscious and blissful, will not give us any idea of him. With this description alone we cannot distinguish the Jīva from Brahman even, not to speak of the other Jīvas. But when the specific attributes of difference, dependence and similarity are added, the Jīva concept will become clear. Thus difference, dependence and likeness constitute the indestructible and eternal Jīva nature, and they form the Svarūpo'pādhi or the intrinsic adjunct constituting the very nature of the Jīva.

Amśa (fraction) and Amśī (the whole) are other symbolic expressions used in Mādhva philosophy to convey the relation between the Jīva and Īśvara. The Amśa concept does not in any way deny the absolute difference between the two. It means only a potency and is used to indicate the closeness of the Jīva to Brahman. In Christianity creatureliness is the characteristic of the Jīva and there is a yawning chasm between the Jīva and Īśvara. The concepts of Pratibimba and Amśa deny this and indicate the closeness of the Jīva to Īśvara, though they are both different. The Jīva's potential divinity is implied in it while denying any kind of identity with God. It also facilitates the development of Bhakti as love of Him as depicted in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, in contrast to the response of awe towards Him as the centre of unthinkable Cosmic Power and majesty.

SECTION IV

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION.

Spiritual Perfection

As in all schools of Vedānta, the sole object of Śrī Madhva in formulating his doctrine of Realistic Dualism was the salvation of man. Philosophy, theology and religion all go together as a complex system of thought in the Indian tradition. Many modern Indian academicians have protested against the Vedānta being designated as a theology by Western savants. They feel it a humilitaion to be called

theologians. In their opinion their academic dignity will receive due respect only when they are called philosophers. They fail to notice that this attitude is the result of over-looking the significance of philosophy in Western parlance. Philosophers of the West are free lancers in speculative thought, and do not concern themselves with any message concerning the ultimate destiny of man. It is this attitude that has alienated philosophy from theology in the West. But in the Indian tradition philosophy need not necessarily be extravagantly speculative nor theology dogmatic and authoritarian. Both of them are allies mutually helping to give man a reasoned world view based on data derived from observation, experiment and supersensuous perception. Such world views are called Darśanas — insights into, or outlooks on, life. Śrī Madhva's system is one such, and all the various disciplines of a philosophic system like a theory of knowledge, ontology etc., have been developed only to give an intellectual foundation for its devotional super-structure.

Aparokṣa or direct experience of the Supreme Being is the aim of all Vedāntic systems. In the endless movement of Time the Jīva is caught as a captive in the transmigratory cycle, going from birth to death and death to birth, to reap the fruits of his own actions through enjoyment and suffering. Such a fate has befallen the Jīva, because of Svabhāvājñāna or Avidyā, the ignorance of his real nature, which is characterised by consciousness and bliss and sense of dependence on the Divine. But this Avidyā too is inert, and it functions only by the will of the Lord. Thus the will of the Lord is the root of the bondage of the Jīva, and only the Lord's grace can release him ultimately.

To be released from it and be admitted into the beatitude of unfading Bliss and Consciousness that the Divine is — which is the Jīva's basic nature too — is the aim of Śrī Madhva's system of Vedānta as also of all other systems.

Those Jīvas who are eligible for such release are the Mukti-yogyas, while the Nitya-samsārins, impervious to spiritual values, are content to be whirled in the cycle of Samsāra consisting of repeated births and deaths to reap the fruits of one's action for all time. In the course of their evolution the Mukti-yogya Jīvas have to slowly develop the requisite qualifications for attaining the consummation of liberation in the end. First and foremost of these is Vairāgya or freedom from worldly attachments. For, it is by such attachments that the Jīva gets bound to the wheel of Samsāra, and unless these attachments gradually get attenuated, no spiritual progress is possible. Sound ethics is therefore the foundation of spirituality; and intense worldly attachments stand in the way of both. Kāma (desires, especially sexuality), Krodha (anger) and Lobha (greed), are the gateways to perdition, according to the Gītā, and the man who wants spiritual upliftment is asked to abandon them. As attachments grow less and less, the Jīva begins to develop faith in God, the Independent Being, and a sense of one's dependence on Him. He becomes receptive to spiritual values. He is then fit for Śravaṇa or hearing from a proper teacher, the meaning of the scripture dealing with devotion to God. What he has heard and learnt he has to reflect upon (Manana) and gradually make it a part and parcel of his thought-structure. When all his attachments have weakened and his intellectual doubts on God and his relationship of absolute dependence on Him, the one Independent Being, are cleared, then he is fit for Nididhyāsana or one-pointed and continuous meditation on Him and His attributes. Unlike in some of the other systems of Vedānta, Śravaṇa and Manana are only subsidiary to Nididhyāsana in Madhva's system.

Madhva also insists on the importance of a proper Guru or Teacher to explain the correct meaning of the scripture and guide one in one's spiritual practices. The blessing of the Guru is considered to be a very essential factor in one's efforts in this field. A competent Guru has also got to give

proper criticism of other opposing systems of thought, as intellectual vacillation of disciples will not disappear otherwise. Because of the great emphasis given on this aspect of teaching, the Mādhvas have been criticised for their intellectual pugnacity and acrimonious attitude. But they on their part deny any such ill-will. They do not argue for the sake of argument or out of enmity, but only to help an aspirant in the higher discipline of meditation by clearing all intellectual doubts. According to them unless systems opposed to Mādhvism are criticised threadbare and their hollowness shown, one's faith in the true doctrine will not be unshakably established. This will no doubt engender an element of exclusiveness and fanaticism as in almost all forms of theism.

Long and intensive practice of Dhyāna leads to direct realisation (Aparokṣānubūti). The intensity of one's aspiration and effort has a special significance in this system. For in Mokṣa also there is variation in the degree of enlightenment and bliss attained by the Jīva, and this depends on the degree of intensity of the practice.

The Sādhana: Karma and Jñāna

Though God's grace is the ultimate cause of liberation, the Jīva has to make himself eligible for it by strong aspiration and prolonged and assiduous Sādhana or spiritual practice. The first stage of Sādhana is the performance of one's duties and other noble works without any desire and as offerings to God. Such discipline of work is called Niskāma-karma.

The topic of Jñāna-karma-samuccaya (the combination of work and knowledge) is a frequently discussed topic in the various schools of Vedānta. The Advaitins reject such combination and hold that the abandonment of all Karma at one stage is necessary for a spiritual aspirant. Rāmānuja upholds the performance of the scripture-ordained works till the end of one's life. Madhva also rejects the

Samuccaya-vāda (combination theory), but the Karma he rejects is only the fruit-oriented performance of rituals and of other works. The Vedas speak of such works, but they do not enjoin them. The object of the Veda in giving a place for such desire-oriented rituals is only to attract man to the Vedic teachings and ultimately raise him to the level of Niṣkāma-karma (work without any selfish motive) advocated in the Gītā.

The Bhagavad Gītā raises Karma to a level at which there is no opposition between Karma and Jñāna. That this is the trend of the Gītā thought and not of supporting fruit-oriented Vedic ritualism is clear from the fact that it gives a very vehement criticism of such ritualism in the second chapter. This great Text envisages three types of aspirants from the point of view of Karma. There are great enlightened men like Sanaka and others who are from the very beginning fit for absolute renunciation and engage themselves in the highest and intensest form of meditation. There are others like Janaka and other Rājaṛṣis and divine personages who have come with a mission for the world. Though they are perfect and do not require the aid of Niṣkāma-karma, still they engage themselves in it for Lokasaṅgraha or preservation of orderly life in society by setting ideal examples of selfless action. The third class is ordinary men, Mukti-yogyas, plodding their way to spiritual realisation. Their spiritual effort is strengthened by unselfish action, as it makes them less and less self-centred and more and more established in non-attachment. The path of work is described by some thinkers as Pravṛtti-mārga, the quest of worldly fulfilments. Such a description is blatantly antagonistic to the Gītā ideal of work. It really tends towards Nivṛtti, which means abandoning self-centredness and not mere abstinence from work. There is no such problem as that of Jñāna-karma-samuccaya (combination of work and knowledge) according to Madhva's system. Karma of the Gītā type is integral with Jñāna and a very potent spiritual discipline. But it is not an end in itself. While it

is not necessary for illustrious aspirants like Sanaka, it is the discipline through which ordinary men mature in the spiritual path.

Bhakti or Supreme Devotion to God

Spiritual fulfilment is ultimately had through Bhakti, which alone can attract to oneself the grace of God, which is the proximate cause of salvation. As Śrī Madhva accepts the authority of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, and has made it the pivot of much of his preaching work, the steps of devotion mentioned in it must have been acceptable to him. Devotion, both as a discipline and as a fulfilment, is described therein as ninefold:

*Śravaṇam Kīrtanam Viṣṇor, smaraṇam pāda-sevanam /
arcanam vandanam dāsyam sakhyam ātma-nivedanam //*

— Hearing about God's majesty, singing His praise collectively, silent remembrance of Him through the repetition of His names, service of His aspect as society, worship of His holy images, salutation of His presence in all beings, cultivating the attitude of His servanthip, entertaining intimacy with Him, and making a whole-hearted and unreserved offering of oneself to Him. Any Ācārya who accepts the authority of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa has necessarily got to accept the validity of all these disciplines.

In a definition of Bhakti by Śrī Madhvācārya, it is defined as:

*Māhātmya-jñāna-pūrvas tu suaṛaṇaḥ sarvato'dhikaḥ /
snehaḥ bhaktir iti proktaḥ tayā muktir na cā'nyathā //*

— Bhakti is that continuous flow of the heart that has been liquefied by love towards God, which is preceded by a deep understanding of the majesty, omnipotence and omniscience of the one Independent Entity on whom all the universe depends and has its being, which is unshakably rooted in the object of love, and which cherishes Him as the most supreme value.

In such a conception of Bhakti the contrast between Bhakti and Jñāna disappears, just like the opposition between Karma and Jñāna. In the Advaitic way of thinking Bhakti and Karma have a place only till one attains what is called the purification of the mind which prepares the Jīva to Jñāna discipline which consists in the recognition of the oneness of the Jīva with Brahman. But in the Dvaita doctrine, Bhakti is a means and an end in itself. Knowledge generates love and love strengthens knowledge. They thus form a single psychosis directed to the Supreme Being. They form each other's constituent. These constituents are a vivid understanding of Divine majesty and one's absolute dependence on Him on the one hand, and loving attachment to Him as the most precious object of love on the other. So when Jñāna is spoken of as the cause of Mukti, it is inclusive of Bhakti and vice versa.

Three stages of Bhakti are distinguished: First, what precedes the general understanding of the doctrine (Parokṣa-jñāna); second, what follows such understanding; third, what follows spiritual realisation (Aparokṣa-jñāna), and the attainment of Divine grace. Grace and Aparokṣa reveal the absolute dependence of the Jīva, who is the Pratibimba or reflection of God, the Bimba or the Original. It removes the Avidyā of the Jīva in both its aspects — Svarūpācchādikā or what hides the Jīva's intrinsic nature as consciousness and bliss, and Paramācchādikā or what hides from him his real relationship to Brahman as one of dependence.

Such Bhakti is an end in itself. Some authorities call these stages as Bhakti, Pakva-bhakti (ripe devotion) and Paripakva-bhakti (consummate devotion). The interlinking of Bhakti and Jñāna and stages of the development of this holy passion are graphically expressed in the following verse of Śrī Madhva:

*Bhaktiā Jñānam tato Bhaktis
tato dṛṣṭis tatas ca sā /*

*tato muktis tato Bhaktih
saiva syāt sukha-rūpiṇī //*

— By devotion mediate knowledge is gained. That helps the growth of Bhakti further, resulting in enlightenment. Enlightenment gives very ripe devotion. From that one gets liberation and then one attains to the consummation of devotion, which is an end in itself, conferring absolute bliss.

The dawn of ripe devotion or Pakva-bhakti enables the aspirant to practise Nididhayāsana or continuous meditation on his being only a reflection (Pratibimba) of God (Bimba), having no independent existence or power apart from Him. He has to visualise the Bimba vividly. This meditation can be done in three ways according to the competency of the aspirant. The very ordinary person can meditate on Him externally in an image; the aspirant of middling type, as within himself; and the best of aspirants, as everywhere. The sense of an independent self-centred existence is called Avidyā, the Svarupājñāna (the ignorance of one's nature), and it is the basic cause of the Jīva's involvement in the miseries of Samsāra consisting in repeated births and deaths. Continuous meditation attenuates this film of ignorance, but the enlightenment he gets thereby is still a mental construct. It is only when God finally bestows His grace that Avidyā is entirely dissipated and even this mental construct is infilled with, or replaced by, the real presence of God. The aspirant is then face to face with God, His Bimba. He realises himself as an entirely dependent existence (Pratibimba), participating in a modicum of His nature as existence, consciousness and bliss. Such attainment is called Aparokṣa or immediate experience. In such a Jīva Paripakva-bhakti or consummate devotion dawns.

The Jīva however still retains his individuality. Any loss of it, be it in God even, which according to them is impossible, is stigmatised by the Mādhvas as death of the Jīva. Salvation is not Jīva's death, but enjoyment of intense bliss while still retaining individuality. If Mokṣa meant only

death of one's self or a vague indiscrete consciousness, it is not worthy of attainment. It must be a much more intense enjoyment than anything one has in this world. A criticism may be levelled against such a conception that it is only a transference of the values of this world in an exaggerated way. Such a criticism holds good even if it is held to be an impersonal sense of joy or negation of all pain. For these too are worldly values. A criticism of this type is held as invalid by the Mādhvites, as the bliss enjoyed is something welling up from within the Jīva's own nature as the Pratibimba and not a transference of worldly values. As the Pañca-bheda (fivefold difference) is applicable in the state of release also, the individuality and the capacity for enjoyment of the Jīvas varies too. Each Jīva has its own unique individuality, and gets enjoyment according to his own varying capacity aided by the intensity he has put forth in his Sādhana.

Some Special Features of Madhva's Bhakti Doctrine

The Bhāgavata Purāṇa has for more than five hundred years been recognised as a source book of Bhakti doctrine all over India. In the popularisation of this great text Śrī Madhva himself had played an important part, as most of his discourses were based on it. In the Bhāgavata, besides devotion as understood generally, there is also detailed depiction of two unique types of it — Vidveṣa-bhakti or devotion through confrontation, and Kāma-bhakti or devotion with the colour of sexual passion. As examples of Vidveṣa-bhakti, the Bhāgavata gives detailed narration of the instances of certain titanic personages like Hiranyākṣa, Hiranya-kaśipu, Rāvaṇa, Kamsa, Śiśupāla, etc. Through fear or hatred of God, they entertained intense enmity towards Him, and He approached them as their antagonist and killed them, for giving them salvation. Mādhvites do not recognise these descriptions as literally true. Devotion is always based on a sense of 'favourable closeness' (Ānukūlya) with God and on a knowledge of His majesty and excellence. Enmity

and fear are antagonistic to this. So the Bhāgavata descriptions must be taken as Arthavāda or an exaggerated panegyric to bring out certain implications. The relevant implication of the above-mentioned attitude is the intense concentration it produced in those titanic souls. To show the importance of such concentration is the object of including such episodes in the Bhāgavata.

Next there is Kāma-bhakti, which is exemplified in the attitude of the Gopikas of Vṛndāvana towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa. They looked upon Him as their lover in illicit relationship. Many of the most poetical and sublime chapters of the Bhāgavata are devoted to the depiction of Gopī-Kṛṣṇa relationship. The text of the Bhāgavata describes that the reverential study of these chapters with complete faith in Kṛṣṇa's divinity is '*hṛd-roga-śamanam*' or the remedy for the universal disease of the human heart, namely sexuality. One of the most important Vaiṣṇava cults, the religion of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is based mainly on this episode of the Bhāgavata. Great sexual purity also is inculcated in that religion.

But Madhva differs considerably from these views. He holds that this form of devotion is appropriate only to Apsara (nymph-like) Jīvas. Others should avoid it. Not only that, devotion should not degenerate into excessive emotionalism. Its healthy form is a well-balanced complex of emotional and intellectual love. He therefore holds that love of God should be preceded by a knowledge of His cosmic majesty and excellence, and by instruction by a competent teacher of the doctrine of the Jīva's nature as a reflection (Prati-bimba) of God, who is his Original. This does not however preclude an intimate and ecstatic love of Him, but only that such love should not degenerate into rabid sentimentalism or respectably-clothed eroticism.

Another special feature of Śrī Madhva's devotional doctrine is its view on the incarnation theory, which has great importance in the Bhakti doctrine. There are several

types of incarnations recognised in Vaiṣṇavism. These are the Vyūhas, the Kalās and Lilāvatāras. According to the Pañcarātra, the Vyūhas — Vāsudeva, Pradyumna, Aniruddha and Saṅkaraṣaṇa are the Lord Himself manifesting for fulfilling the cosmic functions of redemption, creation, sustentation and dissolution. The Kalāvatāras are the familiar Trimūrti of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Then there are the Lilāvatāras which are the Divine manifestations from time to time for the protection of Dharma. Though generally spoken of as ten, they are many more. The Bhāgavata, while stating that the number of incarnations are innumerable, elevates Kṛṣṇa from among them by designating Him as Bhagavān svayam — Bhagāvan Himself. Others are all His Amśas (fractions) and Kalās (manifestations). But Madhva holds that there is no difference between these incarnations. They are all His Svarūpāmśas or expression of His entire nature. In some more divine attributes are manifest and in some less, according to the cosmic situations necessitating their advents. Even if only a few attributes are manifest, all the divine attributes are residing in all incarnations. The forms they take are also eternal and they never pass away like men when they disappear from human perception. The Supreme Being can be adored in and through them. They are therefore objects of meditation (Upāsana) for all time.

In Rāmānuja's Bhakti doctrine, besides incarnations of the above mentioned type, there is what he calls Arcāvatāra or incarnation as holy images, which gives opportunity for His worship even to the most undeveloped devotees. A great modern Mādhva scholar like Dr. B.N.K. Śarma denies Śrī Madhva's acceptance of such a conception. This denial is hardly credible, because Śrī Madhva himself used to visit many temples, and above all, founded the great temple of Śrī Kṛṣṇa at Uḍupi. It is said in Madhaviyaya that after Madhva infused the divine spirit into the image by touching it, even thirty men together could not lift it. He also made excellent arrangements for worship in the temple by the

monastic heads of eight Maths that he founded at Uḍupi. In the light of this, it is clear that even if Madhva might not have used the word Arcāvatāra, he laid very great importance on worship of God through holy images.

Pratīkopāsana is another field in which Madhva covers new ground. In the Upaniṣads there are many passages equating various objects of Nature, mental constituents etc., with Brahman such as: 'Meditate on the Sun as Brahman'; 'Know Food as Brahman', 'Meditate on Mind as Brahman' etc. The usual interpretation of such passages by Advaitins is that certain attributes of these objects vaguely resembling certain attributes of Brahman are equated by super-imposing Brahman on them through these links. Madhva as an uncompromising theist objects to meditation on Brahman through such superimpositions. None but Brahman Himself can be contemplated as Brahman and not any other object on whom He is supposed to be super-imposed. There is no substitute for Him, and in the light of the Pañca-bheda theory He is different from everything else. But Brahman is the indweller in everything mental and natural, and what the Upaniṣads want is that the indwelling Brahman must be communed with, and not with a super-imposed Brahman. When this is done, through any attribute, that should be thought of as 'Bhūma', infinitely vast. Any attribute of Brahman chosen for meditation should be viewed as infinite in range and content.

Mokṣa or Liberation

The immediate experience of the Divine makes one a Jīvan-mukta, free while living, because his Avidyā (ignorance) has been dispelled. But liberation in the full sense comes only after the fall of the physical body on the exhaustion of Prārabdha-karma, or that quantum of Karma that has brought the present body into existence. The rest of the Karma is all burnt up in the fire of Divine Knowledge, but as the Prārabdha remains, the body also continues to exist.

Man longs to get some idea of his after-life. None who has died, whether it be a saint or sinner, has come back to tell us anything exact about it. So scriptural authority is our only guide. Sceptics would laugh at all these descriptions, and call them superstitions. But a positive attitude, even be it superstitious, is better than pure emptiness that scepticism causes. In the Advaitic conception of Mukti, the Jīva loses his individuality in Brahman. It is sometimes described as comparable to a river becoming one with the ocean or as a person's recognition of one's own real ego on waking from a dream. As there is no Jīva to survive, there is none to have a recognition or entertain the memory of a previous state of misery and bodily existence. In the Dvaita system the individuality of each Jīva as an individual differing from every other and having different grades of capacity for the attainment of bliss, is retained in the state of Mukti also. As a consequence the Jīva is fully aware of his deliverance from the misery of bodily life. Positively speaking, it is a state of surfeit of bliss welling up from within, subject to his inherent capacity and the effort he has put in for its realisation.

The attainment of post-mortem liberation is gradual. After immediate experience and the end of Prārabdha, there is Karma-nāśa or the destruction of the effects of Karma. It is followed by Utkrānti, which means death of the gross body, preparatory for the abandonment of the Līṅga-śarīra (the subtle body) which has been the subtle medium clothed in which the Jīva has been passing through the transmigratory cycles. The Jīva passes through several subtle regions conducted by heavenly messengers and attains to the Brahma-loka where he tarries with Brahmā (Hiraṇya-garbhā or the world-soul) until the creative cycle ends and Brahmā enters into the being of Viṣṇu, the Supreme Being. Along with him the released Jīvas also enter that Supreme Abode known as Vaikuṇṭha. Attaining to that blessed state the Jīva never returns to the spheres of transmigration. He enjoys its felicity through eternity. Having

dropped the Līṅga-Śarīra the Jīvas get bodies of Śuddha-sattva. They can assume any form they like.

It is said that Abode has three regions — Svetadvīpa, Anantāśana and Vaikuṇṭha. The system also recognises the four-fold distinctions in Mokṣa. These are Sālokya (residence in the same region) Sāmīpya (being near Him), Sārūpya (having a form similar to Him in many respects) and Sāyūjya (togetherness with Him). These four states yield progressively higher measures of bliss, and for this reason the Jīvas attain to them according to their eligibility. Such an arrangement fits in which the Mādhva conception of Ānanda tāratamya or gradation in bliss according to the inherent capacity of Jīvas and the rigorousness and concentration of effort in their practice of spiritual disciplines. But it is specially pointed out that no Jīva can get the cosmic powers of God like creation. Besides as God's bliss, knowledge and auspicious attributes are of infinite magnitude, the Jīva does not approach anywhere near Him in these respects. The Jīva's enjoyment is what he deserves. In a philosophy that insists on the ultimacy of difference such a gradation among Jīvas and their inferiority in comparison to God will not be inconsistent.

A question however can be raised whether this will not lead to the prevalence in heaven also of all the evils like jealousy and feud that we find in this world as a consequence of inequalities in the distribution of wealth and consumable resources. The answer given by Mādhva scholars is that it will not. For, though there are distinctions, each will have enough and more of bliss than he can enjoy, and hence he will not feel any jealousy. Besides in that state the Jīva is already rid of all the evil passions that a physical body entails. Each Jīva only feels respect for those who are higher than himself in enjoyment of bliss.

The modern scholarly writers on Mādhva philosophy do not write much about Vaikuṇṭha and the life of the

released Jīvas there. Probably they are afraid of the criticism of fellow academicians that they are indulging in gross anthropomorphism. Prof. B.A. Krishnaswamy Rao however writes a few lines on it in his book on 'Outlines of Mādhva Philosophy', which we quote below: "There are various classes of released souls in Mokṣa and the souls have definite shapes and are atomic in size. Every object in creation in the world has its own beauty and such beauty alone is what obtains in Mokṣa. The souls in the state of Mokṣa have their intrinsic beauty and charm as reflected in their counterparts in this world of ours. The souls have their intrinsic bodies of intelligence and can take up material bodies of Śuddha- saṁtvā at pleasure and cast them away at will. There are souls who are like kings; who are like Ṛṣis doing penance, souls who are always performing sacrifices, souls who are Sannyāsins, souls in holy wedlock and souls practising Brahmacharya. These are mere modes of enjoyment for them. The souls have hunger but whereas hunger is a source of pain for us on the earth, it is a still greater source of pleasure..... Some souls however even after release stay in the world itself and some others in the higher world including Brahma-loka. They are however in the state of Mukti and never return to the state of bondage.

"There is no death, disease, disappointment or any other kind of defect in the state of Mokṣa. All are attuned towards God and there is no competition, no jealousy, no strife. The souls cherish the highest devotion to Śrī Hari and such devotion is in the nature of eternal happiness."

In his Mādhva-vijaya, Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita gives some description of Vaikuṇṭha and some of the scenes there verge on the description of Sṛṅgāra (sex love) in Sanskrit Kāvya. In the Indian tradition such love is considered unspiritual, and one wonders why he has included such scenes in a work considered both as a scripture and a piece of literature by Mādhvas. An excellent description of Vaikuṇṭha as given

in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which has the hearty approval of Mādhva himself, is given below to make the general reader understand the sublime conception of it. In the Bhāgavata, Skandha III, Ch.15 (Vrs.11-25) it is stated thus: 'O mighty-armed one! Brahmā who was thus addressed by the Devas, replied in charming words as follows: O Your elder brothers, my mind-born sons Sanaka and the others who had abandoned interest in worldly life from the start, could travel all over the universe through the sky. Once they went to Vaikuṇṭha, the Realm of Mahāviṣṇu which is an object of adoration for all. All the residents of that Realm resembling Mahāviṣṇu Himself in appearance, had attained to it as the result of the observance of Bhāgavata Dharma (code of devotional disciplines) without any self-centred motives. The Supreme Being, possessed of all powers and auspicious attributes - the embodiment of Dharma and the subject of revelation for the Vedas—abides there in a body of pure Sattva without any touch of Rajas for the blessing of devotees. Thus they went there where spreads the wood-land of Nīśreyasa (liberation) full of wish-yielding trees ever in blossom, as if they were the state of Mokṣa taken shape. There move about devotees in aerial vehicles with their womenfolk, fanned by winds bearing the stimulating fragrance of flowers blooming on the surface of the lakes. Though the environment is sufficient to stimulate the passions in the heart, these devotees are oblivious of all that in their absorption in singing devotional hymns about the Lord. Thus when the hovering bee makes its loud and sonorous sound, as if it were singing the glory of God, the chirping of the numerous birds — the pigeon, the cuckoo, the crane, the Cakravāka, the Cātaka, the swan, the parrot, the peacock and the partridge — stop for a while, as if they were all attending to the bee's devotional hymn. There the numerous varieties of sweet-scented flowers subordinate themselves to the holiness of the Tulasi leaves, though the latter be of unrefined fragrance, seeing that they found favour with Lord

who has given a wreath made of them the most important place in His decoration. There the place is covered with a vast number of golden pavilions studded with precious gems of various kinds — residences which could be had by nothing but devotion to the feet of Śrī Hari. The devotee-residents there with their minds immersed in Kṛṣṇa are insensitive to the exquisite charms of the large number of beauties present there. There, reflected on the crystal walls lined with gold could be seen the unique figure of Śrī Devī, as if she were sweeping the floor with the play-lotus held in her extended arms, while she moves about producing the murmuring sound of the anklets on her feet. And this is Śrī for whose grace all men and Devas labour! On the banks of the coral-bedded lakes with sparkling and cool water, Śrī Devī, while worshipping the Lord's image with Tulasi leaves, finds in these waters the reflection of her own face with high nose and curly locks, and realises that it is the kiss of the Lord that has imparted all this beauty to her face. Those who avoid hearing about the activities and excellences of the Lord that destroy sin and purify the mind of man, but in place of it are interested only in other matters of vūlgar and polluting kind, destructive of one's mind's higher susceptibilities, such persons get no access to that Region. Alas! These evil tendencies they have acquired drive them helplessly to regions of darkness. They indeed are the casualties of the blinding power of the Lord's Māyā, who fail to cultivate devotion to the Lord even after getting this human birth wherein Dharma and Jñāna can be acquired. Even I (Brahmā) and other divinities long to get this opportunity of a human birth. To this exquisite place go the devotees of the Supreme Being, the pure immortal ones, who have overcome the sway of Yama, the god of death, and attain to a state higher than mine. Their eyes stream with tears and their bodies are covered with horripilations owing to the over-powering emotions that well up in them, as they converse among themselves about the deeds and excellences of the Lord."

A General Estimate

We have depicted the doctrine of Śrī Madhva as a believer in it sees it. This is the meaning of taking a phenomenalist attitude in the study of the philosophy of religions. All who look on devotion to God as the highest spiritual value will uniformly raise their hand of salutation to this great devotee-thinker. Like Rāmānuja he has brought to bear his intellectualism in the support of the devotional attitude which is highly coloured by the noblest emotions of the human heart. His sharp logic cuts to pieces the snobbish attitude of some thinkers who make devotion a secondary value and a handmaid to a still higher discipline of knowledge. For Śrī Madhva to love is to know, and to know is to love, each of these two psychoses supporting and enhancing the other, and forming a single unified psychosis directed towards a Supreme Being who is the centre of all auspicious and blessed attributes, and whose grace alone can give salvation to the Jīva. His theology can be designated as uncompromising theism.

In the field of ethics he gives his own original solution of the problem of evil — a problem which is the most difficult hurdle in the way of all spiritually-oriented world-views. His solution is by his doctrine of the threefold categorisation of Jīvas into salvable, world-bound and damnable, and attribution of all evil in life to the evil actions of the souls, especially of the unmitigated evil ones of the last category. He thus lifts God above all blame for evil in the world of His creation. The conception of damnable Jīvas may evoke severe criticism, but the Mādhvites meet this by showing that rigorous logic of a theistic theology requires such a conception and the criticisms are mainly sentimental. No one, they point out, is able to give a better solution of the problem of evil.

As has already been pointed out, his theology and ethics are supported by a well-thought out epistemology. In this field he has contributed three original doctrines — those of Sākṣī, Viśeṣa, and Bheda (difference). His successors

have elaborated these doctrines with a vast body of philosophic literature, thus justifying the claim of his system as the Theistic Philosophy of Realism.

As a Vedāntin, he ranks equal with any other Ācārya. He has written learned commentaries on the basic texts of Vedānta—the Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyana, the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad Gītā. Whereas all other Ācāryas have attempted in their Bhāṣyas only to establish a Samanvaya (harmony) of the various terms and doctrines found in the Upaniṣads, Madhva has established the Samanyaya of the Upaniṣadic thought with the Purāṇas and Itihāsas, which have an important place in the prolific literature he has left behind. Without understanding this basic outlook of his, critics have often belittled his commentaries as concerned only with 'Varāha Purāṇas, Bhaviṣyat Purāṇas etc' and not with the Upaniṣads. This is far from true, as a full study of his teachings will convince any one.

Vyāsa-rāya, the most noted exponent of Madhva's doctrine, summarises it in the following celebrated verse:

*Śrīman Madhva-mate hariḥ paratarah
satyam jagat tattvataḥ
bhinnā jīva-gaṇā harer anucarā
nīccocca-bhāvam gatāḥ
muktir naija-sukh'ānubhūtir amalā
bhaktiḥ ca tat-sāadhanam
hy akṣadi-tritayam pramaṇam akhilā-
mnāy'aika-vedyo Hariḥ*

In the religion of Śrī Madhva, Hari is the Supreme Being. The world of multiplicity is an ultimate reality. The Jīvas are different from these and among themselves. They are the servants of Hari, and there are distinctions of high and low among them. Liberation consists in the enjoyment of the bliss that is inherent in oneself. Pure devotion is the means of attaining it. There are three Pramāṇas (criteria for determining what is true) namely perception, inference and revealed scripture. The sole purport of the entire Vedic revelation is Hari.



Śrī Vallabhācārya : Life

Early Life

All the great Vaiṣṇava Ācaryas — Rāmānuja (1017-1137), Nimbārka (13th century) and Madhva (1238-1317) — had preceded Vallabhācārya and the only other one, Caitanya (1485-1533), was his contemporary. Vallabha (1479-1532), son of Lakṣmaṇa Bhatta and Yellamma Gāru, was of Telugu extraction. Lakṣmaṇa Bhatta belonged to a family of learned and devoted Vaiṣṇavas residing at Kakarvād, a town on the southern bank of the river Kṛṣṇā. Yellamma Gāru's mother belonged to an influential family, as her father Śarma was a priest in the service of the royal house of Vijayanagara. Lakṣmaṇa Bhatta migrated along with his family to Banaras, a city noted for its holiness and its learned scholars. But he was forced to flee the city in about 1479 because of the threat of a Muslim invasion of that place. His idea was perhaps to go back to his village. In the course of his flight when he was passing through a forest region near Campāranya, a locality near modern Raipur, the child who came to be known as Vallabha was born. It is said he was still-born and was miraculously saved. After a short stay at Campāranya, Lakṣmaṇa Bhatta returned to Banaras, as the threatened Muslim invasion did not take place.

Vallabha, as he grew up, showed himself to be an extraordinary prodigy. His education began at the age of seven. Under a teacher Viṣṇucitta by name, he mastered in four years the Vedas, their auxiliaries, the six systems of philosophy and scriptural texts like the Gītā, the Bhāgavata and the Pañcarātra. When he was eleven his

father passed away, and this led to the break up of the home at Banaras. From this time, even from that tender age, Vallabha undertook a pilgrimage of the whole of India three times lasting for a period of about twenty years, and all this time he remained a Brahmacharin — a celibate aspirant. In some of these holy wanderings he was accompanied by his mother and the other family members.

First Pilgrimage

North India was at that time in turmoil because of Muslim invasion. This situation, as also the fact that the original home of the family was in the South, made him travel southward. Passing through several centres of cultural and religious importance, he arrived in Vijayanagar at the invitation of his maternal uncle who held a high position in the officialdom of that State. Kṛṣṇa-devarāya, the famous ruler of that state, assumed power in the State a short time after Vallabha's arrival in Vijayanagar. There was much religious activity in the State at that time, and controversies between the followers of Śaṅkara, the doyen of non-dualistic Vedānta, and the disciples of Madhva, the teacher of dualistic Vedānta, were in full swing. Vallabha, though a boy of about twelve at that time, was drawn into these debates. In a debate with a leader of Śaṅkara's Vedānta, he is said to have come out victorious. This brought him to the notice of Kṛṣṇa-deva-rāya who, though a pious Vaiṣṇava, was very eclectic in his religious views. With the support of the king, the Vaiṣṇavas, in recognition of the above-mentioned victory, is said to have done Kanakābhīṣeka or a shower with gold, to Vallabha, as a sign of giving him the status of an Ācārya. There is a different opinion that the Kanakābhīṣeka took place at a much later date. He stayed in Vijayanagar for about two or three years, during which period he came to have a deep understanding of the Vaiṣṇava philosophy of Viṣṇu Svāmī and of Madhva. Though he differed from Madhva in philosophy, his association with that system was very

close. It was an ascetic of the Madhva sect known as Mādhavendra Yati that first introduced him to Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the most important text that he preached in his mature years. It was again he that in later years helped Vallabha to establish the temple at Govardhana, and in his last days, initiated him into Sannyāsa.

Vallabha's stay in Vijayanagar was only for about two or three years, during which period his genius had opportunity to evolve into considerable maturity due to contact with the numerous scholars and sectaries of that city of enlightenment. His real pilgrimage, considered the second, began when he was about fifteen. Having entrusted his mother and brothers to the safe custody of his uncle, he started with two or three of his devoted followers on this second pilgrimage which was to last for several years. Owing to the prevalence of different accounts of these pilgrimages of Vallabha, there is much confusion about the dates and the sequence and order of the places he visited. He travelled through the whole of Southern India, touching all the important temple towns and centres of religious studies in which this region of India abounded, while the North was in considerable disarray due to Muslim incursions and persecution. Among the places he visited may be mentioned Pampa, Rṣyamūka, Kumārapāda, Śrīśaila, Tirupati, Kāñcīpuram, Kumbakoṇam, Mannārgūdi, Śrīraṇam, Madurai, Tenkāṣi, Rāmeśvaram, Śrīvaikuntham, Ālvār-tirunagari, Tiruvananthapuram, Janārdanam, Udupi, Śrīraṅgapatnam and Gōkaṇam.

It is said that Vallabha had a remarkable experience while he was at Kauṇḍinyāśrama in a dense wooded region of the Eastern Ghats abounding in sandal wood trees. It is said to be the place where the Rṣi Kaundinya gave enlightenment to Viṣṇu Svāmī, who was one of the great Vaiṣṇava teachers preceding Vallabha. The same Rṣi appeared before Vallabha and said: "Our Guru is Śaṇḍilya Rṣi. He performed austerities for a long time on

Mt.Gōvardhana in order that God might manifest Himself to Him. Ultimately he got his reward, for God was pleased with him. As a consequence there appeared before him an ascetic woman named Lalitā Devī. She gave Śāṇḍilya initiation into the practice of Bhakti, saying, 'There is nothing greater than Śrī Puruṣottama. Neither the Vedas nor the Devas know Him fully. One must have full and deep faith in Him and in none else. Giving up all idleness, one must remember God's Līlās, His gracious sport, every moment. You should constantly say to yourself: 'I am a servant of God, He alone is my master. Neither the Vedas nor any man-made means will avail in any way. The happiness of the world, which ultimately results in misery, is no good. When shall I find God? When will God show His favour to me? When shall I see the face of Him who is the destroyer of the pride of all?' If you go on feeling like this, you will see the supreme Līlā of God. Saying this she disappeared. Śāṇḍilya Ṛṣi practised this discipline with the result that he ultimately realised God'. Now Śāṇḍilya is one of the great authorities on Bhakti, and his book, Śāṇḍilya-Bhakti-sūtras, is one of the authoritative texts on this spiritual discipline.

This extended pilgrimage during which Vallabha stayed for considerable periods in the main centres of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism of Rāmānuja and of the Dvaita of Śrī Madhva, gave him opportunities to contact the savants of those systems and know their doctrines at first hand. He also had several controversies with Advaita scholars and Śaivites, and though he totally differed from them, he was never acrimonious in his debates with them.

Having finished his southern pilgrimage, he joined his mother and brother at Vijayanagar which was now the home of the family. After a short stay with his mother, he continued his pilgrimage, now to the Western and Northern parts of India. Paṇḍarīpura the great centre of Kṛṣṇa worship in Mahārāṣṭra, Nāsik, Tryambaka, and some places

on the banks of the Narmadā and Mālva were centres where he had halted for varying periods of time. Finally he reached Mathura, the place of Kṛṣṇa's stay from the time he left Vṛndāvana to the time he shifted to Dvāraka. This land known as Vraja Bhūmi was specially dear to Vallabha and he communed with Kṛṣṇa at every place there associated with Him. According to some tradition, it was here (1492) that Vallabha received the call of God to establish his Sampradāya (sect) of Religion of Grace (Puṣṭi-mārga). After a considerable stay at Vraja-Bhūm, he went further northwards to Kurukṣetra and to Himalayan pilgrim centres like Haridvār, Rṣīkeṣ, Gaṅgotri and Kedāra. After finishing the Himalayan pilgrimages he came to Prayāga, Gaya, Kāśī and to Gaṅgāsāgar in the farthest east. From there he went to Jagannath Puri and finally to Agrahāra where his mother was staying. His first round of All-India pilgrimage on foot, lasting for about nine years, ended with this.

Second Pilgrimage

After a stay of about only one year with his mother, he again started on a second round of pilgrimage. Visiting Vijayanagar once again, he next went to Paṇḍarīpura where Vithoba or Vittalanātha (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) with Rukmiṇī is worshipped. Vallabha's stay here was a turning point in his life. It was here that he received the Divine command that he should marry and take to a householder's life. Till now he was a Brāhmacharin pilgrim and not a Sannyāsin as most of such pilgrims are, and it is not certain whether he had till then any idea of marriage at all. But this divine call gave a new turn to his life and also to the movement he started. It gave him also a uniqueness among all the great Vedāntic Ācāryas of Bhakti, as all the others were Sannyāsins.

He next visited Gujarāt, and then the Vraja land and the Himalayan pilgrim centres including Badarināth once again. Finally he came to Banaras where a surprise awaited him. There a Brāhmaṇa named Devadatta offered his

daughter Mahālakṣmī in marriage to him. The marriage took place in 1500 with his mother's consent. In due course he had two sons Gōkulanātha and Vittalanātha born of her. Of these Vittalanātha, who was highly talented, was to play in later days, an important part in consolidating and regularising the sect originating from his father.

In the course of the years 1500-52, Vallabha, while camping at Gokula, got the divine call to found his new Sampradāya of Religion of Grace. In the age of Kali, man's capacity for spiritual practices has dwindled almost to nil, and he has no way of redemption unless God lifts him up by His grace. For coming within the ambit of this redeeming grace of God, man has only to submit himself out of his free will to His grace, which forms the way He now opened for man through Vallabha. It was revealed to Vallabha that He had chosen him as His mouth-piece. Vallabha gave to this relationship established between God and man the new name Brahma-sambandha, (union with Brahman). Though Vallabha might have been influenced by many a great teacher, he had not accepted any one as his Guru. So his was an entirely new Sampradāya or spiritual tradition starting from him, no doubt on the background of Vaiṣṇavism and Vedānta prevailing in the country. The first convert to the new faith was Dāmodara Dāsa, his constant companion through all the pilgrimage. The initiation was done with the Mantra—, ŚRĪ KṚṢṆA ŚARAṆAM MAMA— *Śrī Kṛṣṇa is my refuge.*

Another great event in Vallabha's life took place in the same year or thereabout. It was the manifestation of the image of Gōvardhananāthji. This occasion is known as Prākātya in the tradition of the sect. This image of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the pose of lifting the Gōvardhana Hill in Gōkula is said to have emerged out of a cave in a hill in Vraja land. After it emerged fully and was offered food offerings by the pious votary Madhavendra Svāmī, the image is said to have refused to take any food unless offered by Vallabha.

Vallabha then offered worship and built a small temple over the image. Sometime after a rich merchant named Pūrṇamāll built a big temple for the Deity according to a Divine command. It took several years to complete, and Vallabha himself installed the image and appointed two priests to serve the Deity. Sometime after Vallabha's time the image was removed from Gokula to Nāthadvāra near Udayapur because of troubles caused by Muslims. The image is now known as Śrī Nāthjee and holds the highest place in the hearts of the followers of Vallabha as the chief of God's Svarūpas or living forms.

Third Pilgrimage

Vallabha's second round of pilgrimages is considered to have ended with his marriage. After spending about a year at Banaras with his mother and family, he started on his third round of pilgrimage which lasted for about four years. During this period he re-visited many of the places that he had already graced by his presence in central, western and eastern India. But having got the commission from God, his present trip was more of the nature of a missionary enterprise than a mere pilgrimage. Wherever he went he entered into philosophical debates with teachers of other schools of thought and established the superiority of the Puṣṭi-mārga that God had revealed to him. In all his debates he was always constructive and never acrimonious. He initiated large numbers of people with the Mantra of Brahma-sambandha, and made them turn a new leaf in their life. For, as will be explained later, this initiation meant the lifting up of the spirit from the life of sin and helping one to surrender oneself completely to God. His preaching to the masses consisted generally in the exposition of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which according to him was the crown of all scriptures. Wherever he travelled he held Bhāgavata-saptāhas — the reading of the Bhāgavata with interpretations for seven days.

Of all places he travelled through, it was in Gujarat that he got the greatest response. Gujarat was in a way

already prepared for a message of the kind that Vallabha was delivering. For, shortly before him a great devotee and composer of devotional songs known as Narasimha Mehta (1414 AD) had thrilled the whole of Gujarat with his musical compositions of a highly poetic and reflective nature. These compositions mostly related to what is known as Śṛṅgāra-Bhakti (love mysticism) expressed through the love of Rādhā for Kṛṣṇa. In his more mature years he rose to higher levels of God realisation, as evidenced by several of his songs which deal with the presence of God everywhere (Sarvātma-bhāva). The preaching of a philosophy of personal devotion to Kṛṣṇa and the rite of Brahma-sambandhā were the right elements required to establish a bond of sectarian affinity in place of the diffused form of Bhakti that Narasimha Mehta's songs had introduced. Though not in Vallabha's life time, there was another influence that helped the spread of his doctrine in the adjacent region of Rājasthān. While the doughty warriors of Rājasthān were reeling under the attack of Muslim invaders, Mīrā Bāi, a princess from the royal family of Mewar, gave a healing touch to the heart of Rājasthān by her thrilling devotional love lyrics that have now gained all-India fame. She lived during the time of Vallabha's son and successor Vittalanātha. It was during that time that Vallabha's interpretation of Bhāgavata Dharma spread in that region also.

Shortly after Vallabha's demise, when his son Vittalanātha was the leader of the sect, the temple of Govardhananāthji came under the threat of Muslim invaders. It is significant that the image was then removed to Nāthadvāra in Udaipur in Rājasthān. The image now known as Śrī Nāthji, holds the highest place in the heart of the followers of Vallabha as the most important Svarūpa (living form) of God, and He receives the reverential adoration of thousands in the form of the most lavish but artistic decorations and countless tasty dishes that the culinary art has at its command. For, as will be explained, the Havallis

or the temples of the Vallabha sect, unlike other Hindu temples, are literally the home of God, and His adoration consists not in formal rituals but in extending to the image a reception with decoration, food offerings and other paraphernalia befitting a royal resident.

Meetings With Śrī Caitanya

An important episode in Vallabha's life during his pilgrimages and after was his meetings with Śrī Caitanya, the great Vaiṣṇava teacher of Bengal. The dates of these meetings are not definitely known but various anecdotes, often coloured by sectarian motives, are preserved in the traditions of both Vallabha and Caitanya sects. The first of such meetings took place at Gangāsāgar where both these great men had gone on pilgrimage. Others took place in Brindāvan and Gōkula, situated near each other and both held sacred by these holy men, because of the association of these places with the life of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The acceptances of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa as the most important sacred text and of Kṛṣṇa as the Pūrṇāvatāra (the complete descent) of the Divine constitute the most fundamental link between them. Temperamentally there was a difference between the two. Vallabha was highly intellectual, and his devotion, though deep and profound, never expressed itself in the overpowering emotional outbursts in the shape of Sāṅkīrtanas and ecstatic dances by which Śrī Caitanya raised in huge concourses of humanity tidal waves of devotion. He conveyed the devotional fervour to his followers through the exposition of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the service of images as the very being of the Divinity. Śrī Caitanya preached the Madhura Bhāva or Śṅgāra Bhakti based on the relation between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa to all his followers, while Vallabha recommended this only to a select few and presented the loving adoration of boy Kṛṣṇa (Bāla-Kṛṣṇa) to devotees in general. Besides, Śrī Caitanya, though a great intellectual in his early days, gave up that line completely when he took to devotional life. whereas

Vallabha till his end used his intellectual faculties for the production of commentaries on sacred texts and for debates with other schools of thought. Śrī Caitanya abandoned home and wife and became a Sannyāsin in early life itself, while Vallabha remained a householder till the last year of his life. It is providential that both these teachers of Bhāgavata Dharma were contemporaries, one flooding the eastern part of India (Bengal) with devotion and the other the western part (Gujarāt and Rajasthān).

The Life of Retirement and Production of Commentaries

After his third pilgrimage lasting for about four years, Vallabha returned to Banaras and joined his family consisting of his mother, his wife and two children. At Banaras he stayed for a few years, where he engaged himself in debates with scholars of Sāṅkara's Vedānta in which the doctrine of Māyā seems to be equal in importance to that of Brahman. This was in contrast with Vallabha's own doctrine of Śuddhādvaita in which Brahman is the sole reality and there is no place for Māyā. In such debates he is said to have defeated many Advaitic scholars and gained many converts in that citadel of learning and orthodoxy. Not being very militant and aggressive in character, he wanted to retire from the environment prevailing in Banaras, and took his residence at Adel, a village near Allahabad, situated in the neighbourhood of the conjunction of Yamunā and Gaṅgā. In that village noted for its natural beauty and its three kinds of sacred Tulasi plants, Vallabha spent most of the last twenty years of his life with his family and a few intimate disciples, going out only occasionally on tours for preaching the Bhāgavata Dharma.

It is most probably during these years of comparative retirement that he produced most of his philosophical and devotional works. It is characteristic of his attitude of humility that in none of his works he calls himself an Ācārya. He designates himself only as Vallabha-dīksita, the suffix

being probably a family title. It is also characteristic of him that, except in respect of his small treatises, he did not complete his major works, the Bhāṣya or commentary on the Brahma-sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa and his commentary on the Bhāgavata. All those who have earned the status of Ācāryas before him — great personages like Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka and Madhva — have written complete commentaries on these Sūtras, which gained them recognition as Ācāryas. But Vallabha wrote a commentary on the Sūtras only upto 3-2-33 i.e. about two thirds of the text, the commentary on the rest of it being completed by his son Vittalanātha. Vallabha's commentary on Brahma-sūtras is known as Aṇu-bhāṣya, meaning small or fragmentary commentary, for this reason. He, however, brings out all the important doctrines of Śuddhādvaita in it. An equally, if not more, important commentary of his, is that on the Bhāgavata-purāṇa known as Subodhini. Though anticipated by Śrī Madhva, it was Vallabha who first put the Bhāgavata on an equal footing with the Upaniṣads, the Brahma-Sūtras and the Bhagavad-Gītā, all of which had become recognised as the foundational texts of Vedānta after Śaṅkara's time. It was for this reason that in his missionary tours he held Bhāgavata-Saptāhas as his most important programme and the most powerful medium for preaching the religion of grace (Puṣṭi-Mārga). Even the commentary on this text he did not complete. In his third pilgrimage, while returning from Jagannāth Puri, he halted at Gaṅgāsāgara, and there started writing the commentary on the Bhāgavata. He did the work up to the end of the third Skandha, by which time he heard the Divine call that he was to go back to the great Creator before long. So he skipped over the other Skandhas and took up the tenth, the section dealing with Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life. After having completed it, while he was working on the 11th Skandha, he got again the Divine call to return. So this commentary also remained unfinished. This incompleteness of his two major works is to be attributed to his engagement in other

important activities or due to his utter disregard for fame as an Ācārya — a title by which he came to be known after his demise only.

He wrote also a commentary and a Kārika on Jaimini's Pūrva-mīmāṃsa Sūtras, of which the Kārika alone is extant. Besides, he wrote several small books, some of them comprising a few couplets only dealing with various problems of metaphysics and conduct in life. All of them numbering sixteen are combined together as Śoḍaśa-granthas. He wrote also another book Tattvārtha-dīpa-nibandha or Essays on the Light of Knowledge, which is bigger than all the other sixteen books mentioned above. It is a manual of his system giving an outline of his theology and way of life. All the above are in Sanskrit. There are five other books of his in Vraja-Bhāṣā.

His Sannyāsa and Demise

At the end of a life span of fiftythree, Vallabha's career terminated in 1532. His last days were as inspiring as his devotional absorption in his entire life. He was till the last year of his life a householder living with his mother, wife and two children, demonstrating that the ascetic life was not essential in the Religion of Grace. But Sannyāsa had, according to him, a place when one begins to feel the separation from God in the most acute form, which signifies that it is time for one to give up the earthly body and gain full absorption in God. He has described this state in his booklet called Sannyāsa-nirṇaya. He had twice received call from God to end his earthly career, but he waited till now to complete a major part of his mission. After he got the third call he sent for Mādhavendra Purī,*

It is strange that the books on Vallabha describe Mādhavendra Purī as a Sannyāsin of the Mādhva Sect. Purīs are one of the ten Orders of monks claiming spiritual descent from Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. The description of Mādhavendra as a follower of Madhva may be due to the prejudice that writers on Vallabha entertained towards Śaṅkara. Vallabha is metaphysically as different from Madhva as from Śrī Śaṅkara. For further information on this ascetic, see Śrī Caitanya's life.

a Sannyāsin of the Madhva sect who had earlier introduced him to the study of the Bhāgavata and helped in the establishment of the temple of Govardhanadhārī. He got initiated into Sannyāsa by him under the name Pūrṇānanda. Then after spending a week in a closed room in his house, he set out as a wanderer to Banaras. To his sons and devotees who went to meet him at Banaras, he communicated as his last message three couplets written on a stone; for he was then observing silence. The message is this: "If you become divorced from God in any way, your body, mind etc., which really belong to Time, will be devoured by Time. This is my belief. God, who is Kṛṣṇa, is not of this world, nor does He have respect for anything pertaining to this world. Therefore we must love Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone. God is all-in-all here and in the other world. Hence Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the Gopis, is alone worthy of our service with all our body and mind, soul and spirit. He alone can give you everything useful in this world and the next."

He was then staying at Hanumān Ghāt at Banaras. After giving this message, he dived into the water of the holy river Gaṅgā and disappeared. Tradition maintains that a brilliant flame rose from the spot in the presence of a host of spectators and vanished in the firmament.

After Vallabha

Vallabha was succeeded as the leader of the sect by his son Vittalanātha. He was himself a man of great devotion and scholarship. He completed some of the unfinished commentaries of his father and worked for a greater consolidation of the followers of Vallabha who had accepted the Puṣṭi-mārga through the rite of Brahma-sambandha. It was probably in Vittalanātha's time that the Havelli system came into existence. Vallabha had founded only one place of worship and that was of Giridharanātha at Gokula now known as Śrī Nāthāji. In later days it was transferred from

there to Vittalanātha's house, probably to establish his right of possession of it, and during Aurangazeb's reign of persecution of Hindus it was transferred to the present site at Udaipur. Several other Havellis came into existence in later times, most of them under the control of descendants of Vallabha.

It will be noticed from this that Vallabha, though he himself became a Sannyasin in the last days, attached importance to it only as a last sacrament in life. He maintained that the state of the householders was equally favourable for the development of spiritual life. There was therefore no Order of Sannyāsins to preach religion in his sect. It was in the hands of the owners of Havellis who were all householders, mostly the descendants of Vallabha himself. The lavish service of Svarūpas (living images) and the adoration of the Gurus who administered the rite of Brahma-sambandha became the most important religious disciplines. The early disciplines of Bhakti like hearing, chanting, meditating, serving God in man etc., were relegated to the background. The consequence was that degeneration set in, as the Gurus owning Havellis gradually accumulated much wealth and enjoyed social leadership. They came to assume for themselves the title of Maharajas and adopt styles of life that led to blatant corruption. Much worse, the Ācāryas came to be recognised as incarnations of Kṛṣṇa Himself and the credulous devotees began to offer them all the services due to Kṛṣṇa according to the rite of Brahma-sambandha. This misplaced devotion led to the introduction of many degenerate practices which brought much disrepute in the end. It is only in recent times that enlightened public opinion has largely corrected these distortions through reform movements.

Śrī Vallabhācārya : Philosophy Śuddhādvaita

I

METAPHYSICS

Vedānta as a Quest for Unity of Existence

All Vedānta is a quest for discovering the unity of all existence in the Non-dual Sat-cid-ānanda. The schools of Vedānta differ only in their conception of the nature of that unity in its relationship with diversity. While Śaṅkara's system, which is the most widely known system of Vedāntic thought and therefore often spoken of as the *Vedānta*, looks upon Non-duality as the sublation of all diversity, others look upon Non-duality as the subordination of all duality to the principle of Unity. Each school of Vedānta therefore propounds its own notion of the relationship of the unity with diversity — notions which, in spite of their difference, are all at one in denying anything independent of Sat-cid-ānanda.

Another point of speciality with these non-Śaṅkarite schools of Vedānta is that they all affiliate themselves with the cult of Viṣṇu or Śiva or Śakti. The Supreme Reality or Sat-cid-ānanda is identified with one or another of these Deities, and the theological doctrines connected with the Deities and the philosophical principles advocated become almost inseparably blended in these Vedāntic systems. This is one of the reasons why these systems of Vedānta have not generally got as much attention in and outside India as that of Śaṅkara, which keeps itself away from theology at its metaphysical (Pāramārthika) level,

except in that it adopts scripture as the highest authority for the supermundane truths. At the same time it is popular among ordinary theologically minded devotees, because it is accommodating enough to give all personalised cults also a place as starting point.

Critique of Māyāvāda

The system of Vallabhācārya, known as Śuddhādvaita, is one of these important Non-Śāṅkarite Vedantic schools affiliated to the Vaiṣṇava cult. Vallabha (1479-1532), son of Lakṣmaṇa Bhatta and Yellammagāru, was of Telugu extraction, although he was mostly brought up in Banares where his parents had settled. During his lifetime he travelled three times all over India, except in the eastern parts, to learn, in the first instance, and afterwards to preach his doctrines. All the great Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka, etc. had preceded him, and the only other one, Śrī Caitanya, was his contemporary, whom he seems to have contacted at least twice. The influences of all these are therefore bound to be reflected in his doctrines.

The starting point of his philosophy, however, is not the systems associated with these teachers, but that of Śāṅkara, which he considers to be not sufficiently non-dual or Advaitic. To explain the manifestation of the Non-dual Sat-cid-ānanda as the world, Śāṅkara, he points out, has to invoke Māyā. Māyā must either be a power within Brahman or it must be external to Him. If it is within Him, it must be attributively related to Him, which will make Brahman a qualified entity (Saviśeṣa). The thesis that Brahman is Nirviśeṣa (attributeless impersonality) will then have to be given up, and Śāṅkara's system will be basically indistinguishable from other systems of Vedānta. If Māyā is not within Brahman it will be something outside Him, in which case Māyā will be just like the Prakṛti of the Sāṅkhyas, an independent dynamic substrate of evolution. Dualism will be the result. So Vallabha criticises the Advaitic doctrines of Śāṅkara as a kind of 'Sāṅkhya in disguise'

and propounds his theory of Advaita which he calls Śuddhādvaita in contra-distinction to Śaṅkara's Advaita, which he designates as Kevalādvaita or Nirviśeṣādvaita.

The term Śuddhādvaita means pure Non-dualism, purity consisting in that it does not accept Māyā, a principle of illusion that has necessarily got to be conceived as outside Brahman. For, Brahman, who is Satcidānanda, is truth unalloyed, and there can be no touch of illusion or falsity in Him. Māyā can therefore be only His real power, producing real effects and not false appearances. This eschewal of Māyā, as a principle or category of 'falsity, either internal or extraneous to Brahman, is the most important feature of Śuddhādvaita. According to the system, the term Māyā means the real power if it is conceived as within Him, If on the other hand it is conceived as outside of Him, it becomes a dual category of falsity compromising the doctrine of non-duality.

If the Māyā doctrine as propounded in Śaṅkara's system is rejected, Vallabha has to give a substitute doctrine to explain the fundamental problem of all Vedāntins — how to accommodate the diversity of the world of living and non-living beings with the concept of Non-dual Brahman who is accepted as the cause of it. There are two kinds of causes involved in the production of a thing. They are the material and the instrumental causes. To take an instance, in the production of a pot, clay is the material cause (Upādāna), and the potter is the instrumental cause (Nimitta). Both these causes being distinct entities, the potter can make the pot without loss of entity in the process. This is the position adopted in pure dualistic systems, where God and the material He works with are taken as distinct and independent as the potter and the clay. But no Vedāntic system accepts this dualistic position, as Vedānta accepts only Non-dual Brahman and no second by His side as an independent entity. In such a system therefore Nimitta (instrumental) and Upādāna (material) causes have to be

one and the same, and that one is Sat-cid-ānanda Brahman. This idea is put in a terse expression by Vedāntins as *Abhinna-nimittopādāna* doctrine (the doctrine of non-difference of material and instrumental causes of the world). This position looks an absolute contradiction from our worldly point of view. A carpenter or a potter cannot work on himself. He requires materials quite different from himself to work with. There are, however, substances in Nature which undergo changes without an instrumental cause, say, as when milk changes into curd, or where some chemical changes naturally take place in a substance. In such cases, the entity itself gets totally changed. If we apply it to God, God must be lost in creation. This militates against the very idea of God, and thus the doctrine of *Abhinna-nimittopādāna* ceases to be understandable from our worldly experience.

It is to get over this difficulty that Śaṅkara comes forward with his theory of Vivarta-Vāda or apparent transformation, based on his conception of Māyā and Adhyāsa (super-imposition). The classical example of apparent manifestation is that of a piece of rope appearing as snake to one in semi-darkness, without the snake being actually there on the rope. Here the rope has, for practical purposes, become the snake for the period of perception as far as the man perceiving the illusion is concerned, without its being actually there on the rope. The rope however is not actually changed. The whole world phenomenon in relation to Brahman is conceived on this analogy. On account of Avidyā (ignorance), Brahman appears to have become the world but it has not really become so and the world is not actually there, though experienced as such for all practical purposes. Followers of Śaṅkara feel satisfied with this explanation of the doctrine of *Abhinna-nimittopādāna*, but many others are not, and it is they who have come forward with alternative explanations which look more satisfactory to them.

Avikṛta-pariṇāma-vāda

Some of the reasons for dissatisfaction with Śaṅkara's theory have already been stated. Besides the metaphysical difficulties that are quite serious, the most disconcerting thing about this explanation is that it reduces moral and spiritual effort into something meaningless; and the God of love to whom you pray and whom you worship becomes a mere appearance which is not actually there when you worship and pray. Upholders of Vivarta-vāda will stoutly deny the validity of this criticism and offer very recondite explanations. But the point that has to be remembered is that these explanations have satisfied only themselves and their followers. Other Vedāntins who do not see eye to eye with them have advanced alternative explanations and Vallabha is one of them. His explanation is embodied in the doctrine of *Avikṛta-pariṇāma-vāda* or the theory of an entity expressing itself really as an effect without itself undergoing change. In the very face of it the theory looks self-contradictory and absurd from the point of view of our experience, as has already been mentioned. But it is pointed out that this absurdity is present only if we equate Brahman with a big block of stone or a perishable substance like milk. In striking contrast to these, Brahman is Spirit, Sat-cid-ānanda Absolute. He defies the laws of world-based logic. He is the meeting ground of all contradictions which stand dissolved in Him, by virtue of His being the Supreme Spirit. Otherwise He will be only matter, if He is to be cribbed, crabbed and confined within a world-bound logic. He actually manifests Himself sportively as the world of living and non-living beings. But His entity is not in the least affected by this process. To say that this manifestation is not actually there but is superimposed on Brahman is tantamount to abandoning non-dualism, as already pointed out, by positing the pre-existence of a limited consciousness (Jīva) to superimpose, a world to be super-imposed, and Brahman to be superimposed upon. The pre-existence of these three entities compromises non-dualism

absolutely. So better than that is to accept the omnipotence of the non-dual Brahman and His uniqueness in being the solvent of all contradictions.

So Vallabha's position is that Brahman Himself has manifested as the universe; but no change or transformation of any kind has come over His entity thereby. The world manifested by Him is actually there and not imagined to be there by any one because of Avidyā. But Vallabha accepts superimposition in another sense, without compromising the absolute objectivity of the divinely created world. The Jīva, owing to Avidyā, or ignorance generated by desires and attachments, makes a wrong and perverse evaluation of the world, taking an ego-centric, or self-centred view of what is really the Lord's playful manifestation. It projects this perverse apperception on the really existent world, which as a consequence becomes for him a *Samsāra*, a situation of entanglement, in place of being the Lord's *Līlā* or sportive manifestation. Thus Avidyā generates *Samsāra* and not the *world*. When the Jīva changes its outlook and becomes God-centred, it is released and attains to fellowship with God. What ends here is the Jīva's *Samsāra* and not God's world, which continues irrespective of any Jīva overcoming his Avidyā. For, the world is in no sense generated by the Jīva's superimposition. It is the real manifestation of *Sat-cid-ānanda* Parabrahman.

Doctrine of Āvirbhāva and Tirobhāva: Akṣara, Jīva and Nature.

The manner of Brahman manifesting Himself as the real world of Jīvas and matter without the aid of any extraneous entity and without Himself undergoing any change in the process is explained by Vallabha by his theory of Tirobhāva (concealment) and Āvirbhāva (manifestation). Brahman's manifestation means, withdrawing or concealing His attributes of *Ānanda* and *Caitanya* partly or entirely, and presenting Himself as lesser categories. *Sat-cid-ānanda*, in the fullest manifestation of all these attributes, is the

transcendent Brahman or Puruṣottama, who is identical with Kṛṣṇa. Without any change of His entity, He conceals (Tirōbhāva) His Ānanda aspect considerably and manifests as Akṣara. Akṣara is Puruṣottama as the Impersonal Absolute pervading everything as indweller (Antaryāmin), and providing the base or source from which other categories take their origin. When the Ānanda nature is completely concealed, the Jīva category of individual centres of consciousness comes into being. The Jīva has Cit (consciousness) and Sat (existence) only as their nature, and is devoid of Ānanda. The Jīva comes out of Akṣara as sparks come out of fire. They are all parts of Brahman. When both Ānanda and Cit are completely concealed, we get matter, which is only Sat, (existent) and is devoid of Caitanya (consciousness) and Ānanda (bliss). All these manifestations are the very Brahman, wherein His higher nature is only concealed and not destroyed or sublated. They are concealed by the Divine will in order to make His cosmic sport possible. By His will this concealed nature can become manifest. Prayer, worship, and other disciplines and, above all, loving service without any motive, are the ways of invoking the Divine Will to manifest the concealed Caitanya and Ānanda nature. A real purpose is therefore given for all moral and spiritual effort by ridding it of the spectre of illusionism.

Possible Criticism of the Doctrine

Thus Vallabha gets out of the non-dual Satcidānanda, the multiplicity of Jīvas and matter without the help, as in Advaita, of a false entity called Māyā whose location is impossible to fix. This elimination of the Advaitin's Māyā will expose Vallabha's doctrine to the criticism that the Brahman of his system is a mutilated being, some part of His being chopped off as Jīvas and the Jagat. The answer to it, as already pointed out, is Avikṛta-pariṇāma-vāda — that the Supreme being, on account of His being the infinite one, the omnipotent Spirit, can manifest without being

affected like material entities, that the criticism will be relevant only if Brahman were a block of stone or a substance like curd, and that all contradictions lose their contradictoriness in Him. This again may be criticised as a dogmatic position, a way of refusal to answer a difficult question. A fault of this kind is not Vallabha's alone. All the Vedānta Ācāryas have to do this at a certain point when their systems are scrutinized too closely or stretched too far. Śaṅkara also does so in the face of such questions as: How does the perfect and infinite Being become an appearance? To whom does He become an appearance? As what does He appear? Whose is Avidyā? How can there be any place for moral and spiritual effort in a realm of basic falsity of values? There are innumerable such questions on which Kevalādvaita has to stand either on scriptural dogmatism or on logical hair-splitting, which is nothing short of sophistry. The point is that there is no theory of Brahman which can be put into the straight jacket of logic, unless you convert Brahman into space-bound and time-bound matter.

II

Moral Implication of the Doctrine

One advantage of the theory of Avikṛta- pariṇāma-vāda, however, is that it helps the mind to grasp the unity of existence in a God who is at once the Absolute and the Supreme Person, without violation of the foundation of man's faith in the reality of his moral and spiritual efforts to overcome Samsāra. For, God's creation of the Jivas and the Jagat is absolutely real as explained already in the light of the doctrine of concealment and manifestation. The Jiva and the Jagat are the very Brahman Himself, minus his Cit and Ānanda nature, which are only concealed. Thus there is no super-imposition in their manifestation whether of a subjective type as in a dream, or of an objective type as in the snake-rope illusion. But, as stated earlier, also

Vallabha admits an element of super-imposition in the Jīva's outlook on the world and life in it. This however is of an entirely different kind. The Jīva interprets the real world of God's creation in a light that is suited for his ego-centric view and thus makes it into Samsāra for him, in place of being the Lord's sportive manifestation. Here the reality of the world is not questioned as in Śaṅkara's system, for it is not anybody's super-imposition but God's manifestation. But the Jīva's view of it, being ego-centric, is coloured and distorted by Avidyā which has its sole location in the Jīva and in no sense in the Īśvara. And besides, unlike Avidyā in Śaṅkara's Advaita, its function is not the generation of the world, but the much humbler one of imposing a wrong angle of vision. The error is not metaphysical but only valuational. The ontological status of the world is not questioned but the understanding of it is recognised to be perverse. This ego-centric view of the world and life in it is Samsāra; to attain to the God-centric view is release.

The system of Vallabha is sometimes called Brahma-vāda, because the unity and the sole existentiality of Brahman is its only important doctrine in contrast to Śaṅkara's system which is or has become more of a Māyā-vāda than Brahma-vāda; for, the establishment of the mysterious concept of Māyā, which is neither existent nor non-existent, nor a combination of both, which is both positive (Bhāva-rūpa) and negative (Abhāva-rūpa), and which is indeterminate in nature (Anirvacanīya), becomes the main metaphysical concern of the system. In fact Māyā becomes a more profound entity than Brahman Himself. In contrast, Vallabha's system has no such metaphysical interest in determining the nature of an entity like Māyā. Its thrust is essentially religious and devotional. If it concerns itself with metaphysics, it is only to the extent needed to show the relation between the one and the many, which any system based on the Upaniṣads has to do.

III

RELIGION

Scriptures Accepted by the Sect

Vallabha accepts the scripture as the sole authority in spiritual matters. Reason has no place in it, except that of being a modest aid in interpreting and understanding scriptures. Scripture for him is essentially the Veda, and all sections of it are equally important unlike in Śaṅkara's system in which the Upaniṣads or Jñāna-kāṇḍa alone is taken seriously. Besides the Vedas, Smṛti literature based on the Vedas like Vyāsa-sūtras, Mahābhārata, Gītā, Pañcarātra and Purāṇa literature are all accepted as authoritative. In practice, however, it is the Bhāgavata Purāṇa that is the mainstay of this school. It is held that the Veda, the Vedānta-sūtras of Vyāsa, the Bhagavad-gītā and the Bhāgavata are the progressive expositions of the revealed truth, each succeeding one being an explanation and an improvement on the earlier. Thus the Bhāgavata gets the greatest importance in Vallabha's school, as it is taken as the best elucidation of the earlier revelations. The Bhāgavata is a text of the Kṛṣṇa cult, and Vallabha's system, through its acceptance of the Bhāgavata as its main scripture, becomes one of the several schools for the practice and propagation of devotion to Kṛṣṇa. The metaphysical background described earlier is only a support for its devotional practice, besides linking it with the Vedānta.

Kṛṣṇa or Sat-cid-ānanda Parabrahman

Sat-cid-ānanda Parabrahman, also called Puruṣottama, is, for Vallabha, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Even of Kṛṣṇa, His aspect as the shepherd Boy of Vraja is the most popular. Kṛṣṇa with Gopis too has an important place, but Rādhā, following the Bhāgavata, does not find a place among them. A female figure worshipped with Kṛṣṇa is only called Svāminī. In this respect this system, which came into vogue during the same time as Caitanya's differs from that school in which

Rādhā dominates the scene, and devotion easily takes the turn of Madhura-bhāvas (conjugal love). In Vallabha's school that form of love is confined to a select few, and the pattern of devotion encouraged generally is the service of Boy Kṛṣṇa.

In the theology of this school Kṛṣṇa is both the Supreme Person (Puruṣottama) and the Absolute Being. He has a form described in the Bhāgavata. Form (Upādhi) and spirit are not different in the Supreme Being, nor is the former a limitation unlike in the case of individuals like ourselves. To take an analogy, the orb of the sun is the concentrated centre of light and heat, from which these energies in their less concentrated degrees radiate everywhere. The sun is the support of the light and the heat, and not they of it. Form is no limitation on Kṛṣṇa. He is ultimately the centre and the support that sustains all His emanations including the all-pervading Brahman, without in the least being affected or exhausted by them.

Conception of the Akṣara

The Supreme Brahman, Puruṣottama, has His immediate emanation in Akṣara. Emanation of Brahman in this system means presentation with the concealment of essential nature in some respects. Akṣara is Sat-cid-ānanda, with the Ānanda aspect considerably concealed. He is lesser than Kṛṣṇa, the Puruṣottama, who alone is Sat-cid-ānanda in fullness. The Akṣara is the Impersonal Being, with whom the Śuddhādvaitin identifies the Brahman of Śāṅkara's system of Advaitā. It is interesting to note that in Śāṅkara's system the personal is the Apra Brahman (lower Brahman), and the Impersonal, the Para Brahman (the Supreme Brahman). Here the tables are turned, Puruṣottama being the Supreme, and Akṣara the Impersonal His emanation only. This kind of accommodation of the Impersonal Brahman is the common feature of most of the other non-Śāṅkarite systems of Vedānta also.

Conception of the Jīva

The impersonal Akṣara is the source of the Jīvas and the world of matter, as also the indwelling spirit (Antaryāmī) in them. It has already been stated that in this system matter does not mean anything different from Brahman, but He Himself with Cit and Ānanda nature concealed completely, and Jīva, with the Ānanda aspect completely hidden and Cit partially. Jīvas are countless in number and come out of the Akṣara like sparks of fire, endowed only with Caitanya and no Ānanda. It is not that the Ānanda nature is lost; it is only concealed owing to ignorance brought about by the will of the Puruṣottama, whose Divine Sport the Jīva and the world are meant to subserve. The Jīva is both the agent and the enjoyer. It is atomic, and in its state of ignorance, it is not all-pervasive. But when its Ānanda nature is restored in liberation, it acquires all-pervasiveness. But as the distinctiveness of the Jīva is maintained in the system even in liberation, it must be inferred that this restoration is partial. The Jīva is a part of Brahman and not a reflection. 'Being a part' does not mean that there must be identity. It means that the Jīva's foundation is Brahman just as gold is of the ring. In the light of this theory, scriptural passages like 'Thou art That' and 'All this is Brahman' can be understood not in a figurative sense as in Śaṅkara's system but literally; for the Jīva is of the substance of the Supreme Self with one attribute concealed. None the less the Jīva is of His substance. There is no extraneous element like Māyā providing an Upādhi or Adjunct, through which the Ātman has to be indicated. The relation between them is one of identity in spite of the distinction.

Pravāhinī, Maryāda and Puṣṭi Jīvas

A distinguishing feature of Vallabha's system is the classification of the Jīvas according to their varying capacities. The main classes are: Maryāda, Puṣṭi and Pravāhinī, and these have distinct goals to attain at the

end of their evolution. The doctrine of Tāratamya, of inherent distinctions in the capacities and the goals of souls, is one distinctive feature that this system shares with Madhva's, which came into existence only much later. In the Advaita of Śaṅkara Jīvas are all similar in their nature and realize their identity with non-dual Brahman ultimately. In Rāmānuja's system also all Jīvas are basically equal though their attributive knowledge is contracted or expanded according to their evolution. They are all eligible to salvation in course of time. Some unique Jīvas "in the abode of Viṣṇu" like the Nityasūris' (eternally illumined) are mentioned as a special category, which has never been in bondage. All the liberated Jīvas maintain their numerical distinctive nature while having qualitative equality.

Of the three main Jīva types in Vallabha's system, the first two, Maryāda and Puṣṭi, are of divine nature, and their evolution is towards the Supreme Puruṣottama whom they are bound to attain in course of time. In contrast to these are the Pravāhinī — souls whose inherent nature makes them love the life of Samsāra, and they eternally go round and round in cycles of birth and death. Some of these may be only Ajñas (ignorant) who are tied down to the life of Samsāra by bad association, and these may turn to the life of righteousness and piety when they happen to have the association of the good. But the others among them are Durjanas, souls who are positively evil and wicked (Āsuric or demoniac), and are doomed to eternal darkness (*Andham tama*).

Among the Jīvas with divine tendencies, the Maryāda type are those who believe in self-effort in spiritual matters and stick to the Vedic disciplines or to the paths of Yoga or Jñāna. The term Maryāda means 'living and striving within the limitations of laws and disciplines'. Believing in the efficacy of their own effort, they meticulously observe all rules of conduct and strive assiduously to practise the Sādhana laid down in the scriptures. By this they evolve

spiritually and attain to mergence in Akṣara Puruṣa, which has been described as the immediate emanation of Kṛṣṇa, the Puruṣottama, with the Ānanda aspect considerably concealed. They cannot attain to Kṛṣṇa, Sat-cid-ānanda in His fullness, He is attainable only by pure grace.

What is Puṣṭi or Poṣaṇa

The highest type of Jīva is the Puṣṭi Jīva. The word Puṣṭi literally means 'nourishment', and taking hold of this meaning, unsympathetic critics of Vallabha's system have misrepresented it as a gospel of epicurianism, having the fattening of the body with good food as its ideal. The degeneration that set in the system in later days, justifies this criticism to some extent. Puṣṭi or Poṣaṇa does not refer to the nourishment of the body. It indicates the special spiritual nourishment that the Jīva receives when the grace of God descends on him. While the expression Puṣṭi is found in Vedic literature in the sense of nourishment, it is not used in this sense of grace there, although we find many Mantras appealing to God's mercy. In the Upaniṣads, however, the conception of 'Varaṇa' (selection) and 'Prasāda' (grace) are present. The Kāṭha is one such Upaniṣad. In the Bhāgavata it is clearly explained in the words: *Poṣaṇam tad anugraham* — Poṣaṇa is His grace (II 10-4). The Bhāgavata is full of this idea. The sixth Skandha of the Bhāgavata containing the account of Ajāmila's liberation, is known as Puṣṭi-skanda, as it speaks even of an absolute sinner being redeemed by divine grace. It is through the bestowal of this grace that the men and women of the most backward and uncultured tribe of cowherds of Vṛndāvana rose so high in the scale of devotion that they evoked the admiration of highly cultured men like Uddhava. There is no condition for this grace. Avoidance of evil, performance of good deeds and practice of spiritual discipline are there, but the devotee accepts the idea that even the performance of good and evil deeds is dependent on the wish of the Lord. An Upaniṣad says: "Him alone

does He cause to undertake good deeds whom He wishes to uplift; Him alone does He cause to perform evil deeds whom He desires to lead downwards." The implication of this is pre-destination and denial of free will. Every system that accepts an absolutely omnipotent Divine Will, is ultimately driven to this position. The other alternatives are to accept the idea of a limited God, or the idea of a philosophical Absolute to whom the world and all its values are non-existent appearances. Great thinkers have shown leanings to all these three alternatives. Vallabha's choice is for the first. One may dislike him for this, but otherwise the choice is between a limited God and a dreamer Absolute, who reduces all values to chimera.

This does not mean that the doctrine lays a premium on sinning, moral indifferences and spiritual lethargy, but it wants man to understand that the attaining of the Infinite *Puruṣottama* is not the fruit of man's moral and spiritual efforts. These can help him to attain Him only partially — as His manifestation called *Akṣara*. But the *Puruṣottama*, the full *Sat-cid-ānanda*, can be attained only by one whom He lifts up. It depends on His choice, and this choice need not take place in accordance with any fitness or antecedent merits. He is absolutely free. The recipient of grace may sometimes be a saint or sometimes a sinner like *Ajāmila*, or unregenerate folk like the inhabitants of *Vraja*, or sometimes even demoniacal spirits like *Hiraṇyakaśipu* and *Rāvaṇa*. A devotee does not question the propriety of the Lord's choice. When a sinner like *Ajāmila* is saved and he attains to divine love, the true devotee does not judge the Lord as partial. He leaves it there, saying: "I do not understand. It is the Lord's will."

So the *Jīva* on whom the choice of God falls is called *Puṣṭi*, or the divinely nourished soul. He is one who is accepted by the Lord as His own. The sign of such *Jīvas* is that they have an innate and unconditional love and attachment to the Lord. The love is not something stimulated

by external conditionings, but a reflection from the soul of the light of divine favour that has fallen on him. It is therefore of an entirely different order from the type of devotional capacity which the Maryāda Jīvas possess. The Maryāda Jīvas are at best motivated by the desire for Mokṣa or release from Samsāra and mergence in the Impersonal Akṣara, and they depend on the effort they put in. To them devotion is only a means for this. But for the Puṣṭi Jīva, devotion is both the means and the end. He may practise devotional disciplines but it is more as an expression of his innate inclinations and not as a condition for securing His grace. The Divine Will is omnipotent, and nothing can compel it. The soul has been brought into existence for the service of the Lord, and the Puṣṭi Jīva is one who fulfils this by eschewing even Mokṣa or freedom from transmigrating existence, and preferring the service of the Lord with the body and the soul as the end in whatever condition he is placed. Though He eschews Mokṣa, which gives Brahmānanda, he becomes eligible for the infinitely superior form of Ānanda, namely Bhajanānanda, which can be had only in the service of Kṛṣṇa, the Pūrṇa- Puruṣottama, who is the source and the essence of all Ānanda.

The Operation of Grace

The importance attached to the doctrine of Puṣṭi or grace has given Vallabha's system a distinctiveness of its own among the various Vaiṣṇava schools of thought. All the Vaiṣṇava schools accept the nine forms of devotional disciplines mentioned in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa — Sravaṇa or hearing recitals and expositions of divine excellences; Kīrtana or choral singing of the Lord's praise; Smaraṇa or constant remembrance of Him through Japa, meditation etc; Pādaseva or service of the world recognising it as a Pāda or aspect of God; Arcana or worship of Him in images; Vandana or salutation which consists in an attitude of genuine courtesy to all as temples of God; Dāsya or cultivating the attitude that one is a servant of God; Sakhya

or sense of intimacy with Him; and Ātmanivedana or surrender of one's self and everything to Him. Generally in all Bhakti schools the first six items are practised as preliminary disciplines or Aparā- bhakti, by which one gets gradually spontaneous love of God without any external stimulation and becomes capable of practising devotional attitudes and self-surrender. The final stage is called Parā-bhakti. Vallabha thinks that this graduated discipline is for Maryāda or the law-bound Jīvas. Those who belong to the Puṣṭi group could, according to a special revelation he had, start with the last, the earlier ones being merely expressions of the loving relationship with God. Grace of God can achieve what the effort of man cannot. The admission to his devotional school, which is essentially the way of Grace, is symbolised by a ceremony called Brahma-sambandha, by which the Jīva surrenders himself completely to God, gets absolution for all his past sins, and starts on the new life of complete dependence on Divine Grace. The Mantra of self-dedication uttered on the occasion runs as follows: "I, whose Ānanda nature has been suppressed by the misery arising from separation from Kṛṣṇa for ages, now dedicate to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa my body, senses, vital breaths, and mind together with their functions, as also my wife, house, children, possessions, wealth and hopes along with myself. O Kṛṣṇa, I am Thy servant! I am Thine!". This Brahma-sambandha absolves one from all past sins. It is explained thus: "Just as the dirty waters of drains and small streams become one with the holy river Gaṅga on their mingling with it, and their dirt and refuse disappear, so do the sins of those who surrender themselves to God get washed away when they get united with God."

The efficacy of such an initiation depends on the strength of the faith and aspiration of the disciple, and those without it can only make a caricature of it. By starting the life of devotion from the highest level of self-dedication, what is done is to open up the Jīva to the operation of Divine grace, by which alone he will have Ruci or innate

hankering for God. The first six disciplines of devotion seek to generate Ruci, but they fail because they are often undertaken by a self-centred devotée and it is therefore still within the bounds of Samsāra. Samsāra, as already stated, is the self-centred outlook on God's created world. Puṣṭi is the abandonment of this outlook and the assumption of the attitude that oneself and the world of which one is a part, are not for one's own sake but for the sport of God and that one's true place in it is to be a participant in it by playing one's part, and not to be an exploiter or a trader in this divine dispensation. When the dedication or Ātmasamarpaṇa, as described before, is performed, the earlier six disciplines are no longer a means for attaining any extraneous end, they become the spontaneous expression of Bhakti, which is explained as the service of the Lord with the feeling that one is His Dāsa or servant, and the purpose of one's existence is His service.

Seva Versus Mukti

This service takes three forms — Kāyika or what is done with body, Vittaja or what is done with wealth, and Mānasa or what is performed with the mind. This definition and analysis of Bhakti is so comprehensive that it can be applied to men at all stages of spiritual evolution. Though the mental attitude of intimate relationship and continuous remembrance and self-dedication, is the essence of it, the extension of devotion to service with body and wealth is very significant. For one in the early stages of development, these are more practicable than the highest form of mental service. For, mental service alone may, in their case, be a deceptive smoke screen for lethargy and miserliness. In the Vaiṣṇava systems, and especially in Vallabha's sect, service with body and wealth has taken the form of serving God in images. Kṛṣṇa is adored in images in Havelis, as the places of worship are called. Unlike Hindu temples, they are not publicly owned institutions, but they form the

residence of the Gurus, who are not paid priests but leaders of the sect claiming descent from Vallabha himself and ownership of the Holy Images. The worship done there is not Pūja as in temples but Seva or non-ritualistic service of the real Presence manifest in the image. It is said that Vallabha himself had collected a number of such images, consecrated them and distributed them among his disciples for worship. The Śrī Mūrti or Svarūpa, as the image is called, is not a mere symbol of God but His very being. According to the Brahma- vāda theory of this school, everything is Brahman, with one or more of his attributes concealed. In the holy image, He reveals Himself to receive the loving adoration of the devotees. It is also accepted that the faith and loving adoration offered for generations adds to the Divine presence in the image. Thus the Śrī Mūrti is in Himself Divine and not a mere symbol of God, and the worship offered is not a symbolic worship but the loving reception and care of a most honoured and beloved one.

Child Kṛṣṇa is the most common Mūrti that is worshipped. The image is bathed, decorated, fed and put to sleep with great care and devotion, and often lavish expenditure is incurred on these. All the best ingredients are used in this form of Seva, and while there are no rituals, great attention is bestowed on neatness, decorations and the artistic side of the service. Various kinds of savoury preparations are offered without any consideration of expenditure. Generally Kṛṣṇa's life is divided into eight sections, and in the hour representing each phase of his life, a service is performed with appropriate decorations and offerings. Services are short, and the worshippers throng to have Darśan. The Shrine is closed at other times.

It is, however, unfortunate that these Vaiṣṇava sects confined the meaning of Pāda Seva to service in temples. The Universe is a Pāda, an aspect of the Lord, and so, according to the Bhāgavata, the service of Him as manifest

in all is an integral part of the Vaiṣṇava discipline of Pāda Seva. In fact, the Bhāgavata refuses to recognise image worship as effective unless it is accompanied with cosmic worship of Him as the true living presence in all.

Three Forms of Service

The Dehaja (physical) and Vittaja (financial) services of the Lord must be accompanied with Mānasa (mental) mode of service also. Mental service is the cultivation of the feeling that one is a Dāsa or servant of the Lord and that the sole purpose of one's existence is to do service to Him, not with a view to get something from Him, but wholly, to please Him. When one gets fully established in this attitude, one transcends Samsāra, even in its noblest form, namely, as self-centred devotion consisting in the aspiration for Mokṣa for oneself and use of devotion as a means to it. For, self-centredness is present even in such an attitude. In this Seva ideal of Bhakti, the devotee is directed to finding self-fulfilment in divine service, and devotion as service is the end in itself. The Dehaja and Vittaja aspects of service here become an expression of the Mānasa service, the spontaneous out-pouring of the feeling that one belongs to Him.

The aspect of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as a child or boy, known as Bāla Kṛṣṇa, is the most popular object of love and service in this school. So what is called the Vātsalya or parental form of devotion is the most favoured form of love practised in worship. Parental love is only another expression of Dāsyā, or service. For Dāsyā or service is the expression of love, and that word may therefore be used to indicate the role of love in all forms. Kṛṣṇa, as the playful boy, attracting the love and affection of all Gokula, is held forth before the votaries, and by songs and other forms of service, an atmosphere is created in which the Deity Incarnate is tenderly waited upon and attended to, fondled, fed and looked after in every conceivable way by loving parents, friends and companions.

Although the love of boy Kṛṣṇa is the most widely encouraged form of devotion, the Śṛṅgāra form of it consisting in the expression of it through erotic symbolism is also accepted and recommended for the select few qualified for it. The love of the Gopikas for Kṛṣṇa as their sweetheart is well-known to all followers of the Kṛṣṇa cult. In the Caitanya cult this form of love, known also as Madhura-bhāva, is openly and predominantly preached, but not in that of Vallabha. It is for the select few of very high qualification. The love of the Gopikas has nothing sexual as understood in this world. It is Dāsya, servitude to God, in its most sublime intimate form. It is Alaukika or supra-mundane, of which sex love as seen in the world is a perversion. The first essential qualification for a follower of Śṛṅgāra Bhakti is absence of sexuality or desires of a sensual nature. In the case of the Gopikas, they died to themselves, or if they continued to live, it was only to realise and love themselves as they were in God. They had no other being apart from God. They are the examples of souls on whom Suddha-puṣṭi, pure grace, has been bestowed. One must have the grace of God even to understand and appreciate it in the proper light.

Maturity of Devotion Through Service

The practice of Seva, both in its physical and mental aspects, brings devotion to maturity when it takes the form of Āsakti or intense attachment to God. It creates proportionate detachment from worldly objects and worldly relations. One's nearest and dearest relatives and things become significant only if they could be accommodated in harmony with the devotee's aspiration for God. Vallabha was generally against his followers taking to the life of Sannyāsa, but if at this stage, life in the world became an obstruction to spiritual life, he had no objection to Sannyāsa. He himself died a Sannyāsin. The different stages of the development of devotion are 'Bhāva' (inclination), 'Prema', 'Praṇaya' and 'Sneha', all being progressive steps

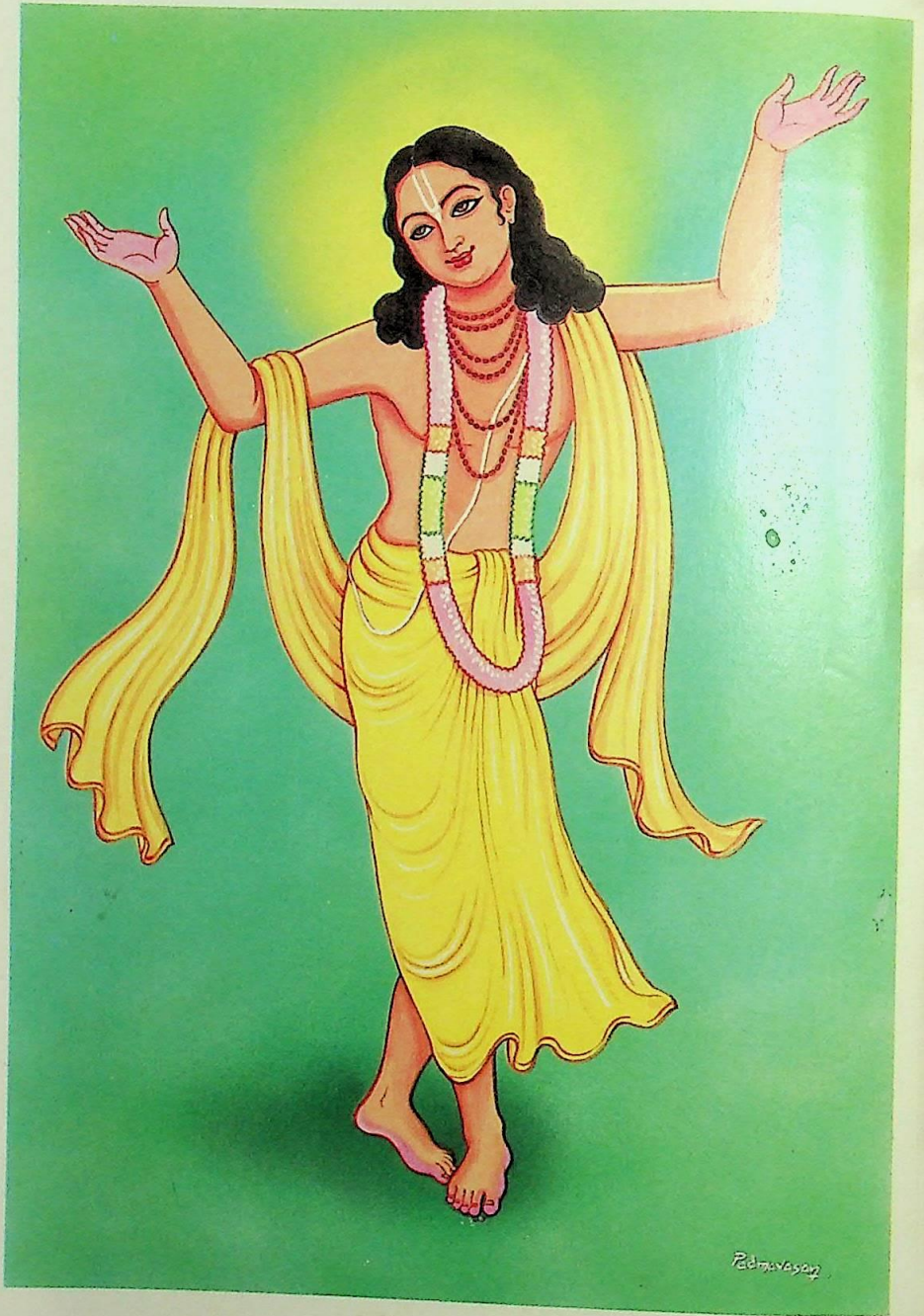
towards Rāga and Anurāga, which are the most intense forms of attachment to God. It ends in Vyasana, which is a sense of God-inebriation in which the world of every-day experience is practically replaced for the devotee by a plane of existence where God and himself and devotees like himself only exist. It has also been described as a state of Āsakti, inebriation, combined with Nirodha. Nirodha in the context means oblivion of one's own self apart from God. It signifies that God is loved absolutely for His own sake, and the soul values itself solely as it exists in and for God. The climax is reached when the soul attains to Sarvātma- bhāva or seeing God in everything. The devotee is in unison with the heart and spirit of God. He is a part and parcel of Divine life. Consequently he experiences God's own delight in Himself and in all things. The light and joy of God passes through him upon all things. The soul is now one with God, not in the sense of losing his individuality in Brahman as in Śaṅkara's school, but in which a lover becomes absolutely united with the beloved without losing his individuality. It is absorption in God, but there is room in it for an eternal rhythm of separation (Viyoga) and union (Samyoga). This alternation between these two states now becomes the most important feature of the devotee's life. The devotees of this school look upon the intense pang of separation or Viyoga as more important than the positive experience of peace and joy that Samyoga or union confers. Perhaps the idea behind it is that satisfaction in the attainment of peace and joy indicates a kind of self-centredness, which cuts at the root of true Bhakti in which there is no room for assertion of the self. It is therefore held that the acme of devotional experience is attained when the soul is sublimated into a steady flow of eager, passionate and all-consuming desire for God, in fact over-powered by the pang of separation with the promise of union. Such a state of mind is what makes one eligible for Sannyāsa according to the genuine teachings of Vallabha.

The Fruit of Bhakti

The fruit or Phala of Seva- bhakti is three-fold. First the devotee attains to *Ālaukika- sāmāthyā* or efficiency of a divine nature. It is not the *Yogasiddhis*, the super-natural powers, spoken of in the Yoga Sāstra. It is said that the pure love of the devotee subordinates the Lord himself to the devotee, just as the unstinted devotion of a wife subordinates her husband to her. The Jīva, as it were, becomes the master of the Lord. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhāgavata. "I am subordinate to the Bhakta, and am therefore without freedom, as it were. Being too fond of my devotees, my heart is under their control." The Gopikas of Vṛndāvana are given as an example of this. When the Supreme Lord Himself is at his beck and call, as it were, every wish of the true devotee becomes charged with a divine power and attains fulfilment even without his knowledge. He is ever protected by the Lord, as Ambarīṣa of the Bhāgavata was, from all dangers and difficulties by the unseen power of the All-pervading Being, with whose life he had become one. The power of the devotee is the Lord's power, and not that of the individual, unlike in the case of the Yogis.

Next the devotee attains to *Sāyujya* or association with the Divine. It may take the shape of mergence in Him as the Akṣara in the case of Maryāda Jīvas — that is, those who have, relying on their self-effort, finally attained God's grace. But in the case of pure Puṣṭi souls, those who are the elect, the pure creatures of grace, there is no mergence, but eternal service of Him in the transcendental state. This is considered the nobler consummation, the highest destiny of the soul. Such a soul gets what is called *Sevōpayogi-deha*, a spiritual body suited for Divine service. It is not made of Prakṛti or material nature, but of Ānanda, Bliss, of which the body of God (Kṛṣṇa) is the condensed essence. The transmutation takes place gradually in the course of the devotees's discipline of Seva in his earthly life itself, and

communion with the Divine is held with his body. In its maturity, the devotee's inner life is centred in this spiritual body, and when his earthly life is over, he attains to transcendental realms clothed in this spiritual body, and loses himself in Divine service.



Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya : Life

The life of Śrī Caitanya narrated here is mainly based on Jadunāth Sirkār's abridgement of Caitanya-caritāmṛta, the most authentic work on Caitanya by Kṛṣṇa Dās Kavirāj (1517-1582). He was a disciple of Raghunāth Dās, a contemporary and personal attendant of Caitanya during his life at Puri. Educated well in Sanskrit and Persian, Kṛṣṇa Dās left his home in Burdwan early in life and wandered towards Vṛndāvan, and settled at Rādhā-kuṇḍ about twelve miles away from Vṛndāvan proper. In his earlier years he wrote mostly in Sanskrit, but at the request of devotees he started writing his magnum opus in Bengali, a classic in that language, in his old age and completed it in 1581, one year before his demise.

Besides Jadunāth Sirkār's abridged translation of this great work, we have also drawn materials from the abridged edition of 'Lord Gaurāṅga' by Sisir Kumār Ghose, the well-known editor of Amritbasar Pattrika, wherein he has given a very interesting and illuminating account of Caitanya's early life, based on facts collected from other works in Bengali on this great incarnation.

Early Life

Śrī Caitanya (1486-1533) was born, on 4th February, a lunar eclipse day, at Māyāpur in the township of Navadvip, as the son of Jagannāth Mīśra, a learned Paṇḍit of the place and his wife Śaci. Situated about 75 miles to the north of modern Calcutta on the bank of holy Gaṅgā in Nadia District, Navadvip of the 15th century was a prosperous

town. It was a great centre of trade and equally of learning. What is called Navya-nyāya, the new system of logic, which had its birth in Mithila, had been introduced to Navadvip before this time. It was developed by a succession of great scholars, at the head of which stands Gaṅgeśa (about 1200 A.D.). Students from all over India flocked to Navadvip to learn Nyāya and get the imprimature of some great scholar or institution of Navadvip. Such development of learning was also helped by the liberal patronage extended to students and professors by the prosperous society of Nadia.

Towards the 15th century, which witnessed the advent of Caitanya, Navadvip, though still reputed as a centre of learning, was without any spiritual lustre. Vaiṣṇavism was the religion professed, but the Paṇḍits in general were without spiritual ardour. Consumption of liquor and meat had become common among them with the development of Tantrism. Religion had degenerated into mere rituals, and the intellectualism of the Paṇḍits was spent in acrimonious and demonstrative debates punctuated with feasting and frivolous entertainments. Devotion to God, which is the important teaching of Vaiṣṇavism, found no place in their lives. Stricken to the core of his heart by this decline of Bhakti and ascendancy of materialism, Advaita Ācārya, a learned man and a genuine Vaiṣṇava devotee of the Lord, used always to pray to Kṛṣṇa "O Lord! if Thou dost incarnate Thyself, then only these creatures will find redemption". It is said that it was in response to the prayers of this devotee that Caitanya appeared on earth.

In the family of Jagannāth Paṇḍita and Śaci, Caitanya was the tenth child to be born. Eight daughters and a boy had preceded him. All the eight daughters died in infancy while the boy Viśveśvara happened to leave hearth and home at the early age of sixteen and take to the wandering life of an itinerant monk. Though the new born boy, the tenth in the family, was given the name of Viśvambhara

by his father in the light of his horoscope, his mother Śaci named him Nimāi, a word meaning 'short lived' and reminiscent of the bitter taste of the fruit and leaves of Neem tree. She did so because of the belief that such an undesirable association with the name would avert possible dangers from the evil influences that had caused the loss of all her earlier issue. Some say that this name was given to him because he was born under a neem tree. His name was changed in recognition of his beauty into Gaurāṅga (the golden-coloured one) at the time of investiture with the sacred thread, and again into Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (he who awakens God in the hearts of men) by the spiritual teacher who initiated him into Sannyāsa later.

His life as an infant and as a child was very much reminiscent of that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself. It is said that the beaming beauty of the infant was so attractive that the women who came to see him fondled him and passed him from hand to hand, leaving little time for his mother to attend to him. It was found the utterance of the name of Hari pacified him whenever he was crying. When he began to crawl he was often found proceeding to the streets, so much so that he had to be constantly watched. This became all the more so when he began to walk. One day he was found to have caught a cobra. Another day he walked into the street with jewellery adorning his body and fell into the hands of a thief who tried to carry him to his den. But wonder of wonders! The thief lost his way as he proceeded and found himself at Nimāi's house. The experience had a miraculous effect on the thief, who turned into an ascetic and lived the life of a holy man thereafter. This was the beginning of miraculous conversions in Caitanya's life.

Nimāi's beauty was exquisite. His complexion rivalled the brilliance of molten gold. His palms and the soles of his feet looked as if they were painted with vermilion. His lips were ruddy like Bimba fruit, and his eyes were most

lovely, elongated like lotus petals and moist as it were with lotus honey.

Many supernatural phenomena were seen manifesting on the boy's body. While sleeping a moonlike aura was sometimes found floating over him and in his bed room many luminous figures appeared before his mother. Once when the mother asked him to go to the next room where his father was seated, both the parents heard the sounds of anklet worn by children, as Nimāi was walking. This was interpreted as an indication of the presence of Gopāla in him. But all this only raised fears in the mind of mother Śaci, who felt that they presaged some evil to her beloved Nimāi.

As he grew up he began to indulge in many pranks like boy Kṛṣṇa, delighting the hearts of people. In the play field he would lose himself in play forgetful even of food, and only the tears of his mother would bring him back home. Restless by nature, he often ran out of his house to those of others and asked for whatever he saw, be it fried rice, bananas or sweets. Every one gave him with pleasure whatever he asked for. Sometimes he took liberties in others' houses, by stealthily drinking their milk, or eating their rice and other edibles. When he found nothing to eat he would break their utensils. If caught redhanded, he would implore in a very winning manner. "Let me off this time. I shall not come here again to steal." None felt angry with him. Only they marvelled at his cleverness and his very attractive poses.

He was given to dancing with companions, chanting Hari's name with hands uplifted. Once this impromptu dance became so exciting and thrilling that an old and learned passerby was caught up in that devotion-charged atmosphere and joined the group of boys who were dancing with Nimāi in the centre.

The boy began to develop traits of character that seemed shocking to his parents. They were orthodox

Brāhmaṇas and mother Śaci observed the caste rules strictly. The boy would tease her by violating them, but when criticised by his mother for this, his reply was: "The idea of external purity is a delusion." If the angry mother took a rod in hand to punish him for his wilful breach of caste rules, the boy would run into unclean places where the mother would not dare to go. Much worse, he would touch a Chamar, an untouchable, and threaten to pollute the mother by touching her in his supposedly unclean state. This would make Śaci run indoors.

Certain unusual signs of divinity also began to manifest in him. Śaci, in consultation with old matrons of the village, believed that Nimāi was possessed by some evil spirit and that offerings made to the goddess Śaṣṭi could save him from the grip of these spirits. The mother prepared the offerings and was taking them to the temple of the goddess. Nimāi suddenly appeared before her and demanded the food to satisfy his excruciating hunger, and snatched it away from the mother. When he was about five, he began to cry one day in utter distraction. Nothing would pacify him. When finally questioned about what he wanted, he replied, "I want the offerings which Jagadīṣ and Hiranya have prepared for God." A shocking demand indeed! The two persons mentioned were pious Brāhmaṇas who, after observing Ekādaśi by fasting, had prepared some offerings to be made to Kṛṣṇa, before they broke their fast. How did the boy know of it, and more so how could he demand it? The two Brāhmaṇas came to know of this, and hastened to see what the matter was. Strangely they felt that Śrī Kṛṣṇa had entered into the boy and was demanding the food. They therefore brought the offerings and fed Nimāi as Bāla-Gopāla. In later years they became the ardent followers of Caitanya.

A still more wonderful conversion was that of a hard-baked Advaitin, named Murāri Gupta, who was an adept in the highly philosophical and abstract text

Yogavāsīṣṭha. Young Nimāi often made fun at his expense mimicking his gestures and pedantic postures while he expounded the text to ardent listeners. "What a perverted child you are!" remarked Murāri, which provoked from the Nimāi the threat "I shall teach you a lesson at dinner time." One day while Murāri was at his meal, Nimāi suddenly appeared and fouled his dish. Murāri was stunned at this. When he recovered from his stupor, he heard the child telling, 'O Murāri, give up your false and dangerous doctrine that you are one with the Almighty God. Giving up these pretensions, worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa.' This had a wonderful effect on Murāri. Next day he went to the house of Jagannāth Miśra, and prostrated himself before Nimāi. At this the parents got frightened that such an adoration of him by a learned Brāhmaṇa might bring evil on Nimāi.

Education and Life as a Professor

When Nimāi was about seven his elder brother Viśveśvar, then sixteen years old, took to the life of an ascetic and left his hearth and home, leaving his parents in great sorrow for what was in effect a bereavement. This brought about more seriousness in Nimāi too. He had refused to attend any Tol (Sanskrit school) till then. Now he began to study and made very rapid progress, as he was a Śrutidhara — one who could grasp and remember anything by hearing once. At nine he was invested with the sacred thread and admitted to the performance of Vedic duties. His father, who was himself a great Paṇḍit, was glad at this, but his joy was short-lived, as he passed away soon after, stricken by an incurable fever. Mother Śaci was now the boy's sole guardian and the head of the family. She took care to see that Nimāi got the best education possible and put him under the tuition of Paṇḍit Gaṅgādās, a person of impeccable character and unrivalled scholarship. Soon Nimāi distinguished himself as the best pupil under the Paṇḍit, and trounced in debate talented fellow-students like Kamala Kānta, Kṛṣṇānanda and Nityānanda. Catching

the debate-fever of Nadia Paṇḍits, he began to go to neighbouring places challenging scholars of established reputation. At this early age he wrote a work on grammar which got recognition even in that place noted for learning. Having mastered literature and grām̐mar, he now turned to the study of logic under the very reputed scholar Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma. Soon he excelled all his fellow students including Raghunātha, who had already written a very authoritative text on Nyāya called *Didhīti*. Sārvabhauma, asked this particular student to analyse a knotty logical fallacy. It took him a whole day to give the right answer. The same problem was given to Nimāi, who did it on the spot in a flash. Raghunātha came to learn from Nimāi that the latter was writing a work on Nyāya. As he himself was writing one in the hope that it would be hailed as the best work on the subject, he was anxious to know how Nimāi's work would stand in comparison with his own. So while they both were crossing the river in a boat to their Master's Tol, Raghunāth wanted to hear some pages of Nimāi's book read. As Nimāi read it, Raghunāth's face became morose and he burst into tears, because of the feeling that his ambition would be defeated utterly in the face of Nimāi's work. To pacify and gladden his friend, Nimāi, without the slightest hesitation, threw away his work into the Gaṅgā, so that his friend's ambition might not go in vain. Thus the world lost a master-piece of Nyāya, but got a Master in compensation.

At sixteen Nimāi started a Tol of his own. Though the youngest professor in Nadia, his widening reputation for learning attracted large numbers of students to his institution. At about this time he married Lakṣmī, the daughter of a noted Nyāya Paṇḍit, Vallabhācārya. Unlike the other Paṇḍits, Nimai continued to entertain his jovial and boyish mood even after he had settled down to a scholarly profession. Though strikingly handsome and reputed for intelligence, he remained playful as ever, and swam, ran

up and down the streets, and played with his students, many of whom were much older than himself.

Somehow, teasing Vaiṣṇavas was one of his hobbies at this time. Once a well-known person named Mukunda, who was trying to avoid Nīmāi for this reason, was however confronted by the latter with the remark, "You avoid me, because you take me to be an infidel. In time I too shall become a Vaiṣṇava but not a humbug like you." Śrīvas, a close friend of his father, once advised him to join the Vaiṣṇavas and lead them by living an exemplary life. Nīmāi gave the mock-serious reply: "Well, respected sir, I have become a Professor at this early age. Let me enjoy my triumphs for some time, and when I am tired, I shall consider your suggestion."

And so he continued his life of teaching the ever-increasing number of students gathering at his Tol, and challenging other scholars to debates. He now went on a scholarly tour of eastern districts to challenge the Paṇḍits in those regions. His fame had already preceded him. He therefore received a red carpet welcome wherever he went. One notable event surprising Nīmāi and others was the adoration given to him by an elderly Brāhmaṇa devotee Tapan Mīśra. Mīśra made his way to Nīmāi and fell at his feet saying that a Divine voice had asked him to seek refuge in Nīmāi Paṇḍit who was no other than the Lord manifest on earth for the salvation of sinners. Tapan Mīśra seems to be the first one to recognise him as an incarnation.

When Nīmāi returned home after one year's victorious tour, he found that his wife Lakṣmī had died of snake bite. He, however, continued his life of teaching, attracting many students and handsome donations from patrons. All the income that came, he never appropriated for himself. It went to his mother who was the mistress of the household. About this time a great scholar named Keśava came to Nadia challenging all the Paṇḍits there. One moonlit night Keśava happened to meet Nīmāi, whom he treated in a

condescending way. Nimāi received this insult submissively. As a topic for exchange of thought Nimāi requested Keśava to describe the glories of the holy river Gaṅgā in a poem. Without any effort the latter composed a hundred grand verses in a short time to the surprise and admiration of all. Nimāi however wanted him to analyse one verse and expound its beauty. On being asked to select one, Nimāi recited one verse from the middle, which he had heard only once, and showed five blemishes in it on the basis of the accepted rules of poetics. The 'world-conqueror', as Keśava called himself, had to eat the humble pie. It is said that the humiliated Keśava had that night a consoling dream in which Sarasvatī revealed to him that Nimāi was Kṛṣṇa himself.

The defeat of Keśava left Nimāi as the unrivalled scholar in all that region. His mother felt her beloved son had achieved all that life could offer. Only he lacked a wife, and she soon managed to overcome this deficiency by getting Nimāi married to Viṣṇupriyā, the daughter of a wealthy and reputed Paṇḍit of the place.

Visit to Gaya and Transformation

It was not long after his victory tour of East Bengal that he undertook a pilgrimage to Gaya, to perform the Piṇḍa or obsequies for the salvation of his ancestors. This was a turning point in his life. After the Piṇḍa rites, when he worshipped at Viṣṇu-pāda, the shrine of the Deity Gadādhara, a strange mood came over him and he fell into a trance. In that trance he was about to fall down when he was supported from behind by an ascetic Īśvara Purī, disciple of Mādhavendra Purī, a celebrated personage who was the first to introduce the practice of Bhakti among Sannyāsins. Nimāi had had a casual acquaintance with Īśvara Purī even at Nadia. As soon as Nimāi came to his normal consciousness, he requested Purī, to his surprise, to help him realise a glimpse of Rādhā's love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Purī initiated him into the Mantra for Kṛṣṇa-worship — a Mantra

which means salutation to Kṛṣṇa, the Beloved of the Gopis. Nīmāi was immediately transformed. His jovial mood disappeared, giving place to one of inexpressible sorrow and inner pathos. Repeated surges of longing for Kṛṣṇa, followed by a sense of the calm of fulfilment, tossed his soul from sorrow to ecstasy and from ecstasy to sorrow. His students who had accompanied him found him reluctant to return to Nadia. He longed to go immediately to Vṛndāvan to meet Kṛṣṇa. Somehow they persuaded him to go back to see his mother. He agreed and returned in a completely changed mood of abstraction.

Gone were his mirth and intellectual aggressiveness. He appeared to be the weakest of the weak. He would speak of nothing but Kṛṣṇa. At Suklāmba's house he fell down in a trance uttering "My Kṛṣṇa!" and when he regained his senses, he touched his heart and blabbered, "I captured my Kṛṣṇa, but he has fled. There is a void in the heart and the whole world cannot fill it. Will no one bring Him back to me!"

Now as a measure to bring him back to normalcy, his old teacher Gaṅgādās asked him to re-open his Tol. He did so, but he could not teach as before. When he opened his book uttering "Hari" as usual, he fell into a trance. For a few days he tried to take classes, but what he talked would be only on Kṛṣṇa and not on the subject for study. At last he asked his students to excuse him for wasting their time. He continued "My friends, as soon as I begin my lessons, an exquisitely beautiful boy of dark complexion comes and stands before me, playing on a flute. The sight of him takes away my senses and I forget everything else. It is no longer within my power to teach as I used to. Allow me to take leave of you all." But they would not go. Nīmāi then proposed to have a Kṛṣṇa-Kīrtan and all joined in the dance and choral singing of "Salutations to Kṛṣṇa! Salutations to Hari!" There began to flow a river of Bhakti and the crowd was, as it were, soon swimming in it.

Self-Revelation

The intellectual life of Nīmāi Paṇḍit thus ended, demarcated by the birth of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the Apostle of Kṛṣṇa-prema. The birth throes of Kṛṣṇa-prema in him were marked by what looked like abnormal moods of frenzy as of one possessed. He developed religious ecstasies and often behaved like one mad. He laughed, wept, incessantly shouted Kṛṣṇa's name, climbed up trees and raved in abstraction imagining himself to have caught hold of fleeing Kṛṣṇa or become united with him. He lost the notion of time, and sometimes thought that morning time was noon. The eight expressions of intense God-love — weeping, laughter, shivering, sweating, horripilation, fainting etc. — began to manifest in him. Profuse sweating was followed by dryness and heat in the body. Sometimes there were shivering, clenching and chattering of teeth. Again the body would become rigid like a piece of stone. Now the breathing would stop and next begin to blow like a gale. The body, now heavy, would next become so light that one could easily lift him in one's arm. At times the body would curve like a circle, or following a hiccup, his otherwise golden countenance would lose all colour. Often the colour of the eyes changed, and the hair stood on end, with plum-like pimples at their roots, oozing blood. These are explained in the genuine writings of contemporary chroniclers. Such external manifestations of the onset of Kṛṣṇa-prema were sometimes very uncontrollable and turbulent in nature. It was only sometime after that his mental feelings and attitudes became more coherent, disciplined and within his own control.

Many Paṇḍits of Nadia who were ill-disposed towards him could recognise in these development only abnormal manifestations and circulated the scandal that Nīmāi Paṇḍit had become mad. But the few true devotees in that region perceived in them the surge of divine emotion, and some recognised in him a divine Incarnation. One of them was

Advaita Ācārya, a pious Vaiṣṇava of Sāntipur in the neighbourhood, accepted by many as the leader of the Vaiṣṇava community. When several Vaiṣṇavas went to him to report about the great transformation of Nimāi Paṇḍit, Advaita said that the previous night he had a dream in which Kṛṣṇa revealed to him the message. "Grieve no more. Your prayers have been heard. I myself am come to teach the way of salvation to men." When he opened his eyes he saw Nimāi standing before him.

Another person to recognise the real identity of Nimāi was the great devotee Śrīvas. There is a revealing incident connected with him. Many of the detractors of Nimāi had gone on a deputation to the Muslim ruler of Bengal, Hussain Shah,* and reported to him that there would be no peace in their part of the country unless he sent his police to arrest Nimāi and his Vaiṣṇava devotees performing their noisy Kīrtans. The Vaiṣṇavas were a little frightened on hearing this. It required a miracle of Nimāi to restore their confidence.

One of those days the devotee Śrīvas was performing worship in his home shrine. A knock was heard at his door, and to the annoyed enquiry he made, a voice replied, "I am He whom you are trying to commune with." On the door being opened, the bright figure of Nimāi went in to the utter surprise of Śrīvas and sat on the seat notionally kept empty for the Deity. To Śrīvas who was standing

* The Sena dynasty which was ruling Gauḍa (Bengal) began to decline from the time of ascension of Lakṣmaṇa Sena (1069). Social decline and political instability caused utter disruption of the life of the people. This facilitated the extension of Muslim aggression into Bengal under Baktiyār. This aggression was only an overflow of the Muslim invasion of India, which had begun much earlier and the Lhodi dynasty (1451-1526) was ruling at Delhi. It was only after Hussain Shah ascended the throne of Gauḍa (Bengal) in 1493 that the country got a somewhat stable and well-administered Government. When Caitanya was a teen-ager, Hussain Shah was ruling over Bengal with his capital at Ramkeli (now in Maldah Dist.). So this complaint was lodged before his Government. The Kazi, who administered the areas around Navadvip.

speechless, he gave the order, "Fetch water, I want to bathe." When he moved to the bath room, they saw a figure of gold lit as with "a million lightning flashes". The water flowing from his body seemed luminous. When he went back to the room of worship, people began to hear the entrancing sound of the flute. Devotees soon brought heaps of flowers, sandal paste and offerings. He then wanted to be taken to the bed room. Then he declared, "I am He who sits in the hearts of all men. I have revealed myself to tell you that you have nothing to fear from the Muslim King. This time I have come not to punish the sinners but to reclaim them. I have come to teach my creatures how to attain Me by Bhakti and Prema. I shall show you how I shall change the heart of the king." Then to demonstrate his power, he called a little girl who was standing by and said, "O Nārāyaṇī, be inspired by the love of Kṛṣṇa." Immediately she fell into an ecstasy. Nimāi then added, "This is how I shall deal with the king". A little later he said, "I am going. I shall come again in good time." With these words Nimāi lost external consciousness. When he came round, he himself wondered how he was there in the house of Śrīvās and he began to pray loudly like a devotee, "O merciful Kṛṣṇa! Save me from all worldly desires and draw me towards your lotus feet." Thus he revealed that there were two in him, Nimāi the devotee and Nimāi the Lord.

These incidents opened the eyes of several people of Nadia, especially of the Paṇḍits proud of their learning. They found that Bhakti was not mere vapid emotional nonsense, but something solid and substantial that can be given by a great Master to others at his will. This notion became still more confirmed when Nimāi demonstrated this power again by imparting Kṛṣṇa Bhakti to a neighbour and friend Gadādhara and a vainglorious ascetic Śuklāmbara, by blessing them with a touch of his hand.

The Gathering of Some Important Followers

A few remarkable personages, who played an important part in Nīmāi's later life, now began to gather round him. The first and foremost of those to gather was an ascetic named Nityānanda. There is an unconfirmed tradition that he was none other than Nīmāi's elder brother Viśvarūp who had turned ascetic and wandered forth from home years back. Whatever be the truth about it, this Nityānanda had turned ascetic in early life, and after visiting many places, he went to Vṛndāvan, where he met Īśvar Purī. Purī advised him that if his object was to see Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he should go to Nadia. Nīmāi had already the fore-knowledge that a great being, who was identical with Balaram, the brother of Kṛṣṇa, was coming to meet him. He gave out the name of the expected person as Nitāi. After some search in Nadia, he was found out. They both met as old friends, and on their meeting, Nitāi had a sudden vision of Gaurāṅga with six arms. In the first two he held a bow and an arrow as Rāma, in the second pair he held a flute as Kṛṣṇa, and in the third pair a Daṇḍa (stick) and a Kamaṇḍalu (water pot) as a Sannyāsin. The vision threw him into a trance. The Master then touched him with the blessing. "Arise! All your wishes will be fulfilled. You shall carry with you the fountain of Bhakti and Prema." Thereafter Nitāi (shortened form of Nityānanda) always followed Nīmāi like a shadow.

Another person to come close to him was Advaita Ācārya, a scholarly and wealthy leader of the Vaiṣṇavas, staying at Śāntipūr, ten miles away from Navadvip. Though Nīmāi had, as already said, revealed his identity to him much earlier, it was only after crossing many hurdles of doubts and scepticism, that he would accept Nīmāi's divinity.

Yet another important person to join him was Paundarika, a saintly person from Cittagong. But the most remarkable one was a Muslim devotee named Haridās who took to the practice of loud and protracted singing of Hari's name. For becoming a Vaiṣṇava the Rāzi, the Muslim ruler's

agent, condemned him to the Korānic punishment to be given to such an apostate. He was to be subjected to lashes in the different villages of the place until the man died. Like Prahlāda of the Bhāgavata no torture could kill him. As the lashes fell on him he felt only thrills of bliss, and he prayed that his ignorant tormenters might be pardoned by the Lord. After a time he fell into a trance creating a great upheaval of devotional fervour in the crowd that had gathered around. The guards finally threw his unconscious body into the river, thinking him dead. Soon he revived with the touch of cool water and scrambled to the shore. The report of these incidents caused a conversion in the mind of the Kāzi too, who soon came to pay his respects to Haridās.

Changing Moods of Nimāi

In those days Nimāi's mood often used to change. From a devotee pining for God, Nimāi would all of a sudden manifest the glory and power of the Divinity attracting the worshipful reverence of all surrounding him. An example of this took place in the house of Śrīvās one day where a similar occurrence had already taken place earlier. In a Divine mood he seated himself in the seat of Viṣṇu, with devotees surrounding him. The room was lighted with the effulgence emanating from his body. A sweet smile and indescribable loveliness graced his face. People felt that they were face to face with the Lord of the Universe. They brought flowers in heaps. The large concourse of devotees did their worship without any hustling or commotion, each absorbed in the devotional mood and oblivious of others in that awesome presence. They all brought large quantities of food offerings which they pressed him to take. He took all that food enough to satisfy the hunger of a 'thousand men'. The Lord looked silent and serene. Each one felt that he was looking at him only. Soon it was nightfall and devotees thought of doing Ārati to the Lord. They fetched Śaci, Nimāi's mother, as the proper person to do this, telling

her that he was, not her son but the Lord of all. The old lady then bowed down to him. The person who had till now treated Śaci as his mother, now planted his feet on her head. She immediately fell into a trance and began to dance. Though ignorant of Sānskrit, she began to chant from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the hymn addressed to Kṛṣṇa by His mother Devaki.

He now called some devotees one by one and addressed them. He called Śrīdhara, an insignificant man, who used to supply him plantain leaves, and blessed him. He fell into a trance. He offered to give to Śrīdhara even a kingdom if he asked for it, but Śrīdhara asked only to be privileged to be the servant of his devotees.

Then he called Murāri, a worshipper of Rāma and Sītā. Murāri saw him as Rāma accompanied by Sītā. He advised him, and through him Advaita Ācārya, to give up interest in occultism, as it would not help any one to attain God.

Next Haridās, the Muslim devotee, was summoned. He testified to the devotees that as the lashes cut into his flesh he felt no pain. Nimāi asked all whether any one wanted any boon, but all refused to have anything except Bhakti. But Mukunda, a devotee of angelic nature, was not summoned but neglected. The poor man was standing outside weeping. Śrīvās therefore asked the Lord why that devotee was thus neglected. The reply was that he would see him only after ten millions of births. When this was communicated to him, Mukunda began to dance in joy; for, the great devotee that he was, he did not mind waiting even for ten million births, if he could see the Lord after that. When the others pushed Mukunda to his presence, the Lord addressed the assembled devotees that his object in dealing with Mukunda in this way was to test faith and show others what true devotion and surrender meant.

This manifestation of the Lord as Almighty lasted till midnight, and then this was the way to the All-sweet.

The Bhaktas felt that the ever-new beauty of the all-perfect Lord overflowed their eyes. He took the devotees one by one and embraced them all. The Bhaktas then experienced the true relation between Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and the Gopis. Just as his power aspect was too much for the devotees to bear, so was his sweetness too. So they appealed to him to present himself as purely human as before and free them from the tension of his awesome Divine presence. "Yes", he said and then with a shriek he fell down. Thus ended what is called Mahā Prakāśa, the great Revelation. It took a long time for him to regain his normal consciousness. All signs of death appeared on his face; but when a song of Rādhā's attendants to their mistress was sung, his link with the normal human consciousness was gradually restored. Then the devotees all began to dance in joy, raising peals of the devotional slogan 'Hari-bol'.

Conversion of Jagāi and Mādhāi

Nimāi and his followers were holding their Hari-kīrtans mostly within closed doors at night and the devotees taking part were mostly drawn from lower castes. This gave ground for criticism of the sect by some sections, especially Brāhmaṇas who were proud of their learning and aristocratic traditions. Nimāi and his devotees now thought that they should not waste their day time but engage themselves in carrying the message of divine love (Kṛṣṇa-bhakti) from door to door. In contrast to the way of pure renunciation for overcoming sexuality, the seed of all sin and suffering, Bhakti was projected as the means for transforming it. Śiva, the lord of renunciation, burnt Cupid by an angry look, but Kṛṣṇa is Madana-mohana or one who could infatuate Cupid himself. So Nimāi and his followers decided to spread Kṛṣṇa-bhakti all over the place by going from door to door with Kṛṣṇa-kīrtans and exhortations to holy living. Large numbers of ordinary people responded to their call but the proud Brāhmaṇas did not and interpreted the visits of these Vaiṣṇavas as spying on behalf of thieves.

Nityānanda therefore suggested to Haridās that if they could convert Jagāi and Mādhāi, they would be able to make an impression on their detractors. Now these two, Jagai and Mādhāi nominally Kotvals or police officers of the place, were confirmed drunkards and rowdies. They were noted bullies and a terror to all people. When Nityānanda and Haridās first went to them with their message of Bhakti, they treated them with contempt and jocularly drove them away. Again they went with a big Kīrtan party with Caitanya in the centre. The noise annoyed the bullies who were having their siesta. Enraged, they threw big brickbats at Nityānanda and Haridās who were at the head of the party. Nityānanda began to bleed profusely, but still he continued to dance, singing the Lord's name. Now Nimāi himself approached the bullies and accosted them. The bullies felt a fierce and irresistible ball of fire was coming towards them. It is interpreted by biographers as Viṣṇu's weapon, the discus known as Sudarśana Cakra. Being stunned, as it were, the bullies stood trembling from head to feet. Nityānanda now interceded with the Lord on their behalf, requesting him not to destroy but save them. The Lord thereupon embraced Jagāi and Mādhāi. At that transforming touch the moral lepers were at once changed into saintly characters. The Lord had taken upon Himself the burden of all their sins. The erstwhile bullies were now writhing in the agony of repentance and wanted to ask forgiveness of all the residents of the place. For this they took their seat for days at the bathing ghat where most people gathered for bath, asking pardon of the people and requesting the crowds to trample on them as punishment for the wrongs they had done. In course of time by their personal labour they made a ghat on the river, which still exists and is called Mādhāi's ghat.

The Kāzi's Transformation

The conversion of Jagāi and Mādhāi made a tremendous impact on the people in general and led to a phenomenal

increase in the number of Nimāi's followers. The streets of Nadia began to reverberate day and night with Hari-kīrtans. The attainment of such wide acceptance of Nimāi and his doctrine was not at all pleasing to the learned and aristocratic Brāhmaṇas of the place. Especially his discarding of caste considerations in spiritual matters was anathema to them. They felt that this would lead gradually to a total disappearance of their importance and influence in society.

So they conspired to complain again against Nimāi to the Kāzi, the local governor of the Muslim ruler of Bengal on the ground that the work of Nimāi and his followers was undermining the religion of the place and unless they were checked it would eventually lead to great social unrest affecting the stability of the State. To the Muslim, Brāhmaṇas and Vaiṣṇavas were all alike infidels, but the Kāzi felt it was his duty to intervene if it was going to affect the stability of the State. So he issued immediate orders to stop all Hari-kīrtans, but it had no effect. So he sent his police to arrest Nimāi and his followers, but they were unable to do so, as huge crowds surrounded them. This inflamed the Kāzi all the more and he let loose some of his Afghan troops to ruthlessly attack and disperse these rebellious people. But devotion had eliminated fear from the people's hearts. When they were attacked at one part of the city, they gathered at another, and thus the Kīrtan parties continued for some time, but eventually they were silenced.

Now the Lord himself took up the challenge. He issued a call to people to gather, and a huge crowd with the Lord in the centre leading them, went as a Kīrtan party in a mood of devotional frenzy to the house of the Kāzi. They wanted to interview the Kāzi. Though at first a little afraid to do so, he finally came out and was face to face with the Lord. The mood of the all-powerful governor immediately changed, and he began to talk in an attitude

of humility. Addressing the Lord as Hari-gaur, the Kāzi said that he had taken action not because he wanted, but because the leaders of Hindu society had prompted him to do so. Further he said, "There is only one God; the Hindus call him Nārāyaṇa. People say you are He. Is it so?" The Lord then held one finger of the Kāzi and said, "You have uttered the holy names of Hari, Kīrtan and Nārāyaṇa. So all your sins are forgiven." The Kāzi was at once transformed. Tears gushed out of his eyes, and he prostrated himself before the Lord in humble submission. Immediately he promulgated an order that none should interfere with the Kīrtans.

Advaita Ācārya

Another hostile element that the Lord converted into his religion of Bhakti was Advaita Ācārya. Though the Ācārya had many occasions to see the divinity of Nīmāi, still he was unconvinced and was of the view that what Nīmāi felt were subjective hallucinations. Though respected by the Vaiṣṇavas as a leader, he did not believe in the emotional Bhakti that Nīmāi was propagating. He believed in Knowledge (Jñāna) as the ultimate discipline and devotion (Bhakti) as the way of life for inferior people. Nīmāi wanted to change his attitude completely. So with this in view, he went one day to Advaita's home at Śāntipūr, which was about twelve miles away from Navadvīp. In an exalted mood, he asked Advaita why he was teaching the wrong theory that Jñāna is superior to Bhakti. When Advaita refused to answer, he rained blows on him with a stick. Though others there protested against the conduct of Nīmāi, Advaita himself was enjoying the beating. Beaming with delight, he exclaimed, "I forsook Him, and He has come here all the way to win me back. Who has more mercy than my merciful Lord?" A little while after, the Lord said loudly, "If you should resort to Jñāna for salvation, you had no business to pray for an Avatār." This was to remind Advaita that he had manifested himself on earth in response to Advaita's prayer to turn the people's mind to the right

path. This announcement was a surprise to the Ācārya. The Lord has many ways of infusing Bhakti. In regard to some he did it with a look, with others by a touch and with still others by a blessing. But in Advaita's case he adopted a radical step.

Transformation into Rādhā's Mood

The savants of the Vaiṣṇava school maintain that Caitanya was Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa come in one body. In His Vṛndāvana episode Rādhā tasted the Bliss that was Kṛṣṇa in various forms of love. Kṛṣṇa now felt that He should enjoy His own Bliss as Rādhā did. It was to fulfil this that in the Caitanya incarnation, He was Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa combined in one personality. He could therefore be Kṛṣṇa in one mood and Rādhā in another. Till now Kṛṣṇa, the granter of Bhakti and the protector of all, was more manifest in him. Now when he was about twentyfour, the Rādhā-mood began to possess him more. He had taught Bhakti till then and now he wanted to teach Prema (intense love) by his own example. Rādhā's intense and intimate love of Kṛṣṇa as a paramour in separation and in union had to be illustrated by his own example. This is said to be the significance of the awakening of the Rādhā mood in him. Earlier to his advent the great composer and poet Jayadeva had described it in all detail in his great composition Gītā-govinda, which had already become very popular. But in Caitanya's after-life, this aspect of divine love, designated as Prema in contrast to Bhakti, was demonstrated as an actual fact.

This change in mood was signalled by the recurrence of frequent mental upheavals and psychic disturbances, as when he returned from Gaya after initiation by Īśvar Purī. These had partially subsided and he had reestablished control over such states. Now with the growth of the Rādhā mood he began to heave sighs of longing, and manifest agonising pangs of separation and swooning.

Besides, he began to express his desire to leave Navadvip and go to Vṛndāvan where alone Kṛṣṇa could be met. This meant abandoning hearth and home, mother and wife, friends, and devotees, to become a Sannyāsin as his elder brother Viśvarūp had done. There was also the feeling in him that so long as he remained as Nimāi Paṇḍit with close relatives and assets of his own, his critics, the sophisticated Brāhmaṇa Paṇḍits of Nadia, would not feel convinced of the new doctrine he preached, and thus his mission in life could not be fulfilled unless he became a Sannyāsin.

When the devotees got scent of this, they tried their best to deter him from his resolution. But the greatest hurdle on the way were his mother Śaci and his wife Viṣṇupriyā. After much persuasion and subtle appeals he got their extremely unwilling consent. And one night in January 1510, without the knowledge of any one, when the whole of Navadvip was asleep, he stole away from home, crossed the river by swimming and ran towards Katva, sixteen miles away, lest any one pursuing him should overtake him.

Adopting Sannyāsa

At Katva lived Keśav Bhārati with whom Nimāi had some contact in early days. He now went to him to beseech him to admit him into the Order of Sannyāsins. But he had to face several difficulties before he could get this end accomplished. A search party headed by Nityānanda had gone to Katva, suspecting that Nimāi might have gone to meet some Sannyāsin. Keśav Bhārati himself was non-plussed as to what he should do. A handsome young man brought up in affluent circumstances, with an aged mother and a young wife at home — to take to Sannyāsa which meant a life of wandering and subsistence on what chance might bring! Seeing the magnificent personality of Nimāi shining like gold, a crowd gathered. But Nimāi was not aware of all the surroundings. His mind was absorbed

in Rādhā's sentiment of separation from Kṛṣṇa and her poignant anxiety to see Him. He must go to Vṛndāvan for this, abandoning all the fetters of the world. The soul in the state of Samsāra is wedded to the body. Renunciation for the Vaiṣṇava meant the breaking of this wedlock and getting wedded to the Lord.

Keśav Bhārati at first refused to give him Sannyāsa, first because by virtue of Kṛṣṇa Prema Nimāi was already greater than himself, and next he had not received the willing and full permission of his old mother and youthful wife to abandon them and take to the life of asceticism. The devotees from Nadia and the local citizens of status and learning all joined in this effort to block Nimāi's decision. But nothing would deter Nimāi. The one thought of going to Vṛndāvan and meeting Kṛṣṇa after abandoning all worldly fetters made him oblivious of every other idea or even of the devotees surrounding him. By very clever persuasion and the intensity of his spirit of renunciation, he was able to overcome the unwillingness of Keśav Bhārati. The ascetic at last initiated him into Sannyāsa and gave him the name of Kṛṣṇa Caitanya — one who evoked the consciousness of Kṛṣṇa in the minds of men.

Soon Kṛṣṇa Caitanya started westward, goaded by his mad longing to reach Vṛndāvan and meet Kṛṣṇa. For five days he walked without food or rest through fields and forests in the region known as Rārḥ until he lost his way and began to enquire of stray passersby about the way to Vṛndāvan. Nityānanda, who was pursuing him, had gone in advance, and meeting a batch of cowboys in a region that Caitanya would be passing through, taught them to sing Hari-bol, and also instructed them to misdirect Caitanya to the way towards the Gaṅgā as the road to Vṛndavana. This would lead the new ascetic to Śāntipur, the residence of Advaita Ācārya. The stratagem clicked and soon Caitanya found himself at Śāntipur when his normal consciousness dawned on him.

Devotees now gathered round, and when the news spread to Navadvīp, streams of people began to trek from there to Śāntipur to see their familiar Nīmāi Paṇḍit as the Sannyāsin Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. Cries of Hari-bol and ecstatic dancing went on continuously at Śāntipur. Even the proud intellectuals of Nadia were converted by the force of renunciation he exemplified. Nityānanda now brought Śāci, the mother of Nīmāi, too along with others. The meeting between the mother and the lost son presented a very piquant scene. She was also taken up with the festive mood that prevailed, and insisted on herself cooking for her son in the feasts that were arranged during the ten days of Caitanya's stay at Advaita's house. Under the compelling sense of his obligation towards his mother, Caitanya communicated through devotees that he was even prepared to return to Nadia if she insisted. But the high-minded lady that she was, her regard for her son's reputation as a Sannyāsin prevailed over the pursuit of her own self-interest. So she gave her full consent to her son's departure from home as a Sannyāsin, with the caveat that in place of Vṛndāvan he might go to Nīlācal (Jagannāth Puri). The former place was far off, more than two thousand miles away, whereas Nīlācal was close by and she could get news of him frequently and he could even visit Bengal occasionally. Once this agreement was arrived at, Caitanya immediately rose up with a 'Hari-bol' and began to walk rapidly to Nīlācal accompanied by a few of his intimate devotees — Nityānanda, Mukunda, Jagadānanda, Govinda, Dāmodar and Haridās.

Trip to Jagannāth Puri

The yearning to meet Kṛṣṇa, at Vṛndāvan now got transformed and seized him with the same intensity to meet Puruṣottama of Nīlācal, who is none other than Kṛṣṇa himself. With little food and rest he practically ran most of the distance and passed through the region now known as Calcutta, a jungle at that time, and soon reached the

border between Bengal and Orissa or Kalinga as it was then known. As there was hostility between the rulers of the two countries, no one was allowed to cross the border by the guards stationed there. The personality of the young ascetic however won over the commander of the border forces and he was permitted to go his way.

He halted at Remuna, some six miles north west of Bālesvar in Orissa, at the temple of Gopīnāth, about whose Kher Prasād he had heard much from Īśvar Purī. Īśvar Purī's preceptor Mādhav Purī had once wandered some two thousand miles from Vṛndāvan to this place and had several miraculous experiences there. Mādhav Purī had installed the image of Gopāla as Govardhana-dhārī (uplifter of Govardhana) on a hill near Vṛndāvan and made arrangements for regular worship. But Govardhana-dhārī commanded Purī in a dream that he should go to Nīlācal and get sandalwood from there and rub him with its paste to cool his body. So the devout Mādhav Purī went all the way braving all perils, and at Remuna he halted at the temple of Gopīnāth. He sang and danced in ecstasy before the beautiful image. On enquiring about the Bhog offered to the deity, he learnt that twelve pots of Amṛt Keli or Cream of Nectar made by condensing milk, which was unrivalled in taste, were offered everyday. Purī desired to taste it, but would not beg for it. Mysteriously the Lord himself commanded the priest to give a pot of it to Purī.

Then Mādhav Purī went to Nīlācal and with the help of the ruler's agent got one maund of sandal wood and twenty tolas of camphor. With this he started his return journey, and on the way stopped at the temple of Gopīnāth again. There he had a dream in which Govardhana-dhārī, whom he had installed earlier at Vṛndāvan, appeared to him and told him that he need not carry all that sandal wood to Vṛndāvan passing through perilous countries ruled by Muslims. It was enough if he applied it over the image of Gopāl at Remuna itself, as Gopāl and himself (Govardhana-dhārī) were the same. The Lord had put Purī

to all this tribulation only to test his faith. Gaurāṅga narrated the whole story of Mādhav Purī to his followers in detail and then recited a verse composed by Purī at the last moment of his life conveying his identification with Rādhā's love for Kṛṣṇa. It runs. "O Lord! gracious to the lowly! Thou art now in Mathura. When will Thou come to me? Darling mine! My heart runs about in pain of longing to see Thee. What shall I do?"

Reciting this verse, the Master dropped down in ecstasy with intensity of love. Lifted up by Nityānanda, he ran hither and thither in a transport of devotion, shouting, laughing, dancing and singing. His voice was choked with emotion and tears were running down his cheeks. He trembled, perspired, wept in joy, stood still, changed colour — now showing remorse, now grief, now stupor, now pride, exaltation or meekness. He passed that night at the temple of Gopīnāth singing and dancing. The priests presented him and his followers with four pots of their famous Amṛt Keli.

Worship of Sākṣi Gopāl

Next he halted at Jaipur and worshipped at the shrine of Varāha with ecstatic singing and dancing. At Katak he went to worship at the temple of Sākṣi Gopāl. The beauty of the image threw him into ecstasy. There, Nityānanda who had visited this temple in earlier days, narrated the legends connected with the naming of the Deity as Sākṣi or witness. According to the legend, in order to save a devotee from an awkward situation, the image walked with the devotee all the way from Vṛndāvan on the understanding that the devotee would not look back in the course of his travel. When he reached his village situated nearly forty mile from Katak, the devotee looked back to see if the Deity was actually coming with him. The image therefore stopped there to bear witness to the truth of His devotee's claim. The image can still be seen at the place.

Arrival at Puri and Meeting Sārvabhauma

Then passing through Bhuvanesvar, the Master reached the river Bhāgri, six miles away from Puri, from where the temple tower could be seen. He felt that Kṛṣṇa was beckoning him from the top of the temple and immediately fell into an ecstasy. He moved slowly, dancing, shouting and laughing, thus making a thousand leagues of those six miles.

Arrival at Puri & Conversion of Sārvabhauma

Reaching the temple premises, Caitanya insisted on going within alone, even though he was warned by his followers that the image of the Deity was fully guarded by temple servants, and none would be allowed to approach him. Breaking the line of the guards in the temple, he rushed like one frenzied towards the image to embrace Jagannāth and in the process fell down. The angry guards were about to assault him when they were stopped by a tall and venerable Brāhmaṇa who was, as it were, sent by Providence to protect the devotee. That personage was none other than Pandit Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma, the doyen of scholars of the time, who had come from Navadvip and settled at Puri at the invitation of King Pratāparudra who ruled over Orissa at that time. Caitanya himself was, as Nimai, a student of Sārvabhauma's in his Navadvip days. The great Paṇḍit felt a strange attraction to the young Sannyāsin and had him transported to his house by his students. The very touch of the young Sannyāsin roused a wave of devotional fervour in them, making them all shout 'Hari-bol' and dance in ecstasy. This impressed Sārvabhauma, who, though a scholar and a follower of all the orthodox customs, was not at heart a Bhakta, a devotee. Still at this moment the devotional sentiment got a temporary hold on him and he touched the feet of Caitanya.

His pride of scholarship however soon asserted itself and made him question his conclusion. For, his estimate

of the Sannyāsin had been made without sufficient proof. He, however, extended hospitality and provided accommodation for Caitanya and the devotees. He now adopted a patronising attitude towards Caitanya, and advised him that he was too young to be an ascetic, that his devotional fervour, singing, dancing etc., were mere eccentricities and aberrations, and that he should now learn Vedānta under him and turn a new leaf in his life. The Master accepted the proposal in all humility. So one day the Paṇḍit read some Vedāntic passages with Śaṅkara's commentary and gave a very scholarly explanation. After a time he asked the young ascetic whether he was following his exposition, and got the shocking reply that the Vedāntic text was in itself simple enough for him to understand, but as for Śaṅkara's commentary and its elucidation, he could not understand even a word, as it all looked like absurdity to him.

This direct challenge to his scholarship came as a great blow to the Paṇḍit who considered himself invincible in debate. Then for a verse from the Bhāgavata for which the Paṇḍit gave nine meanings, Caitanya supplied many more, after showing fallacies in the Paṇḍit's interpretation. Though proud of his scholarship, the Paṇḍit had an open mind, and the clarity and cogency of the young Sannyāsin's words made him convinced that he needed no instruction. He declared that he was Vedamaya (full of Vedic wisdom), and the Vedas were only like a plaything to him. The Master now replied that the Vedas taught only Prema and Bhakti and not the conclusions of soulless logic and pedantry.

Defeated in his own familiar field of scholarship, Sārvabhauma surrendered himself to Caitanya and prostrated at his feet. When he got up and looked, what he saw was not the young ascetic. In his place stood a six-armed divinity. In two of his hands he carried a bow and arrows, with two others he played on a flute, and in the remaining two he carried a mace and a staff and bowl. The sight put

Sārvabhauma into a state of rapt Samādhi. When the Samādhi was over, Sārvabhauma found only the young mendicant in place of that Divine figure. The scholar understood from this that He who appeared as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa had now incarnated as a mendicant. Still there persisted in his mind the doubt that what he experienced might be a hallucination.

Next day very early in the morning, the Master, after having worshipped in the temple, came with some offered food stuff and knocked at Sārvabhauma's door even before he had got up. He sat with the Paṇḍit and asked him to take some of the food offerings. It was against the rigid customs of the Brāhmaṇas to take food before a bath and Sandhyā-vandanam in the morning. At the command of the Master, the Paṇḍit was ready to violate even the most sacred established customs for the sake of God. The law of Prema-bhakti is as Rādhā had sung: "Listen! The flute of my Beloved is beckoning me. I must go. If you are afraid of what others would say, do not come near me. My beloved cannot be won without sacrifice. If you desire to capture Him, you must first surrender everything to Him."

Sārvabhauma had now performed this surrender. He had now thrown away his adherence to ceremonial piety. The Lord embraced him, and immediately, he fell into ecstasy. Coming back to body consciousness, he began to dance inebriated with the bliss of Bhakti and the name of Hari on his lips. His pride of scholarship was now completely dissipated. Prostrating before the Lord, he recited in praise of Him a hundred verses that he composed extempore. He recognised that though Caitanya looked like a man, he was divine. The fabled philosopher's stone may look like an ordinary stone, but if it touches a hard piece of iron, the iron becomes gold. A confirmed logician, more tough and hard than a piece of iron, now became soaked with the soft sentiment of Bhakti by Caitanya's touch. The six-handed divine figure (perhaps a replica of it) that

Sārvabhauma saw can still be seen installed in the temple of Puri. Sārvabhauma's conversion meant the conversion of the whole scholarly world of Puri to Caitanya's devotional cult. Eventually even Pratāpa Rudra, the Ruler of Kalinga and patron of Sārvabhauma, came to recognise Caitanya's greatness, and often visited him to pay his obeisance. Gradually the flood of Caitanya's Prema-Bhakti covered the whole of Orissa which began to resound with Kṛṣṇa-Kīrtan.

Pilgrimage to the South

Caitanya's stay at Puri on this first visit was very short — according to some a fortnight and according to others four months. He now expressed his resolution to go alone to Southern regions on pilgrimage, ostensibly to discover his elder brother Visvarūpa but really to spread the religion of love in these regions. The pilgrimage took two full years starting from 10th April 1510. All his Navadvip devotees like Nityānanda and the new ones like Sārvabhauma were very sad, but when he had resolved one way, the soft-hearted Caitanya was like adamant. With Kṛṣṇadāsa as his sole companion, he started with his waterpot and loin cloth alone as his property. Sārvabhauma requested him to meet in the course of his journey Rāmānanda Roy, who was the Kalinga King Gajapati Pratāpa Rudra's Governor at Vidyānagar on the bank of the Godāvāri. He was told that though not a Brāhmaṇa Paṇḍit, Caitanya would find in him an extraordinary type of devotee.

Caitanya travelled along the east coast to the south upto Setubandha and Kanyākumārī, and then turned back to Puri travelling through Central India, Western India and Ganges valley. Besides the numerous villages through which he passed, he halted for varying periods at fiftytwo important holy places according to the chronicles of his itenary kept by Kṛṣṇa Dāsa who accompanied him. Everywhere his personality attracted large crowds and he inspired them by his chanting of Kṛṣṇa's name and ecstatic dance. He manifested in these travels the magnetic power of his

devotional fervour much more than he did at Nadia. In some places he made a whole village, irrespective of people's caste or creed, dance with chanting of Kṛṣṇa's name and turned them into true Vaiṣṇavas. In important centres of learning and in headquarters of religious sects, he met the theological authorities and generated in them respect for his religion of pure love centering on Rādhākṛṣṇa, in which caste distinctions had no place, which discounted the need of scholarship and logic chopping, and which attached little importance to meticulous ceremonials and ritualism. Only a few important occurrences can be described here.

Meeting with Rāmānanda Roy

The most noted event in this pilgrimage was his meeting with Rāmānanda Roy at Vidyānagar, as suggested by Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma. Vidyānagar, (not to be confused with Vijayanagar) was a place situated to the east of modern Rājahmundry at a strategic point. Rāmānanda Roy was the Governor of that place. Caitanya met Governor Roy at the bathing ghat of the holy Godāvari, while he was resting after a bath. The sight of Caitanya's spiritual lustre attracted Roy to that visiting Sannyāsin. He went near him and made humble obeisance. Soon they entered into conversation, which resulted in each admiring the other for the wisdom and devotion they both revealed. Recognising the divinity of Caitanya, Roy requested him to stay at Vidyānagar at least for ten days. Caitanya complied with the request.

In the course of the conversation they had during the nights, Caitanya, continuously interrogating Roy, revealed the subtlest teachings regarding devotion to Kṛṣṇa, making Roy his instrument. From the earliest stages of the growth of devotional sentiment, Roy was made to traverse the whole gamut of Bhakti ending with the love of Rādhā and her Sakhis (comrades) for Kṛṣṇa without the least trace of selfishness. First Caitanya asked him what the means of gaining devotion was. Roy answered that performance of one's duties as offering to God was the means. He was

asked to go deeper. Roy answered that abandoning all one's caste duties for the love of God and taking refuge in Him alone were the means. Commanded to go still deeper, Roy gave answers revealing step after step the profundities of love for Kṛṣṇa. Devotion mixed with knowledge of God's Mahātmya, or divine majesty, was discounted. For, this would jeopardise pure love with an element of awe. Besides to know is to analyse, but to love is to be attracted. He is the soul of our soul and love must be a sense of intimacy. Roy next mentioned fraternal love, love as Balaram had for Kṛṣṇa, as a still deeper form of love. Asked to go still deeper, Roy mentioned parental love like what Nanda and Yaśodā had towards Child Kṛṣṇa as a step still deeper. Being asked to say if there was still deeper form of love, Roy answered that it consisted in conjugal love — of the type Rukmiṇī and the wives of Kṛṣṇa had for him. The Lord was not satisfied even with this. So Roy mentioned that the illicit love that the Gopis had for Kṛṣṇa was still deeper. For, in such love a woman goes after her paramour without any consideration of his worth or of any social criticism or of any claim on him. She abandons herself to him. So should a devotee abandon himself to Kṛṣṇa. Asked to search his heart for any still deeper form of love, he answered Rādhā's love for Kṛṣṇa was the highest. For, that love was without the least taint of selfishness. Kṛṣṇa's propitiation was the only thing she cared for, and in pursuit of it no social persecution or personal sufferings would in the least deter her. She had sung: "Remind him of it, if he has forgotten it. At first we saw each other and the result was swift love. I do not know where it will lead me; for it is still growing. People say men and women fall in love with each other. But my condition was different. For I had no consciousness that he was a man and I am a woman. I cannot therefore account for my love of Kṛṣṇa."

—Theology of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā

Pressed by the Master to reveal the whole mystery of Kṛṣṇa theology, Roy replied to the following effect: Kṛṣṇa

is the Supreme Being, the source of all Incarnations, the First cause. He has His external Abode where he is eternally present. His body is pure Sat (Existence) Cit (Consciousness) and Ānanda (Bliss). At Vṛndāvan He appeared as the supernatural youthful Cupid (Manmatha), at whose adoration the formula recited is Love, the offering presented is the Seed of Love. There he drew all hearts — of men and women, of the animals and inanimate beings. He was Cupid's self, the conqueror of hearts (Bh.10.32.2). His own beauty charmed His own heart and He wished to embrace Himself. Such is Kṛṣṇa's Form.

Now about Rādhā. Kṛṣṇa's powers are infinite, but three of them are the most important. These are Cit-śakti, Māyā-śakti and Jīva-śakti. The first is His internal and intrinsic Power (Svarūpa-śakti); the second, His external creative Power (Māyā-śakti); and the third, His preservative or marginal Power (Jīva-śakti). Kṛṣṇa's Svarūpa-śakti has three kinds of manifestations according to the three aspects of Sat, Cit and Ānanda. Its Ānanda aspect is Hlādinī which gives bliss; Its Sat aspect is Sandhinī which is creative; and its Cit aspect is Samvit which is Jīva nature. What delights Kṛṣṇa is named Hlādinī. Kṛṣṇa is Himself delight and yet enjoys delight. Hlādinī is also what gives delight to the devotees, and the essence of Hlādinī is called Prema (Love). Prema is a series of emotions and the supreme form of it is known as Mahābhāva. Rādhā is the personification of this Mahābhāva, the highest expression of Hlādinī-śakti.

The Conception of Sakhīs

The play of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa is extremely deep. Moods like Dāsyā (servitude), Vātsalya (paternal affection) etc., cannot comprehend it. The Sakhīs or the female associates of Rādhā alone can comprehend it. Those who adore Kṛṣṇa in the spirit of a Sakhī can alone enjoy this play to the fullness of its development. Votaries have therefore to

practise devotion by adapting the attitude of these Sakhīs attending on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in their amorous dalliances.

The character of the Sakhīs defies all description. A Sakhī does not long to play with Kṛṣṇa all by herself. She feels a keener delight in contriving Kṛṣṇa's dalliance with Rādhā. Rādhā is verily the wish-yielding creeper (Kalpalatā) of the love of Kṛṣṇa, and the Sakhīs are the leaves, flowers and shoots of the creeper. The nectar of dalliance of Rādhā with Kṛṣṇa waters this creeper, yielding to the Sakhīs forming its leaves and flowers delight ten million times more than if they themselves have been watered. The unselfish devotion of these towards each other strengthens the deliciousness (Rasa), and the sight of such unselfish love delights Kṛṣṇa.

The love felt by the Gopis is not lust (Kāma) at all. It is called Kāma for the sake of analogy, that being the only way in which it could be humanly expressed. Kāma or sexual lust cares only for sensual gratification for oneself. The Gopis on the other hand seek Kṛṣṇa's enjoyment, not theirs.

He whose heart is moved by the nectar of Gopi's passion, adores Kṛṣṇa, abandoning Vedic worship. By following the path of passionate love (Rāga) like the people of Vraja contemporaneous with Kṛṣṇa, one is born next in Vraja in the form of the person whose passion he imitated and thus gains Kṛṣṇa. By daily meditation on Kṛṣṇa's dalliance with Rādhā we are born as Sakhīs. You cannot attain Kṛṣṇa however much you adore Him as a Divinity. You attain Him by serving Him as a Gopī, as a Sakhī. In the ethereal body we meditate imitatively on the service rendered to Kṛṣṇa by a Sakhī and in the next birth we attain Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's feet as a Sakhī.

Caitanya as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in One Personality

In this way talking on Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual love that they manifested, and singing and dancing, they

spent the nights for ten days. At the end the Master manifested to Rāmānanda his real form. The Sannyāsin disappeared from view and in his place Rāmānanda found a form in which were blended Kṛṣṇa the Prince of Delight (Rasa) and Rādhā the Supreme Passive Enjoyment. Roy understood that in Caitanya incarnation Kṛṣṇa has taken on Himself the emotion and beauty of Rādhikā in order to taste His own delight. At the sight of this form Roy went into ecstasy. The Master touched him and brought him to normal consciousness, and confirming this understanding of his real nature told him: "I have shown you this form. My body is not of a fair complexion. But its present golden complexion is due to the contact with Rādhā's body. She touches none except the Prince of the Cowherds. I make my own heart imagine her emotions and thus I taste the delicious sweetness of Kṛṣṇa. Keep this matter a secret from the public." When after ten days the Master was about to depart he ordered Roy: "Give up your earthly concerns and go to Puri where I shall soon return after finishing my pilgrimage. There we shall live together passing our time happily in talking about Kṛṣṇa".

Some Important Events in Other Places

Caitanya's pilgrimage lasted for full two years. In his onward journey he touched all the important pilgrimage centres upto Setubandha and Kanyākumārī, moving quickly from place to place with the exception of certain important centres where he stayed for longer periods. One such place was Śrīraṅgam where he stayed with a pious person named Venkata Bhatta for the four months of Cāturmāsya. Every day he bathed in the Kāveri and sang and danced before Raṅganātha. It was there that he met a Brāhmaṇa who read the Gītā every day before the Deity without understanding its meaning in the least. Some scholars there used to scoff and hurl insulting words at this man, but he used to read with rapt attention in spite of the derision of these scholars. Seeing his tears of joy and tremor of body, the Master

asked him what it was that inspired him and put him into rapture. He replied, "I am an ignorant man who does not understand the meaning of the words of the Gītā. Still I am reading it at the bidding of my Guru. When I do so, my heart is rapt, beholding before my mind's eye the dark beauty of Kṛṣṇa as He sits on the chariot of Arjuna as its driver and gives His talk". To him the Master replied: "You alone are worthy to read the Gītā, and you alone understand its essence."

Venkata Bhatta with whom he stayed was devoted to Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa. He belonged to Śrī-Vaiṣṇava sect which recognised Nārāyaṇa as the Deity. Through numerous remarks and scriptural quotations, Caitanya made him understand that Kṛṣṇa is the Deity and Nārāyaṇa is His emanation. He said, "Such is the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa that he wins the hearts of all. The people of Vṛndāvan knew Him not as God but as one among themselves. They knew Him as the son of the chief of Vraja and not as Godhead. Only those who adore Him in the manner of the people of Vṛndāvan can attain to Him. Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa are however one in essence. So are Lakṣmī and the Gopis. Lakṣmī in the garb of the Gopis tasted Kṛṣṇa's company. The devotional doctrine, however, does not recognise any plurality in Godhead. Devotees meditate on Him giving him different images." The Śrī-Vaiṣṇava Venkata Bhatta was thus persuaded to practise devotion to Kṛṣṇa.

At Madurai he stayed with a devotee Rāmadās who was practising fast in sorrow for the account given in Rāmāyaṇa that Rāvaṇa, a Rākṣasa, had touched the Divine Sītā and carried her away. The Master assured him that this was not correct. When he reached Setubandha he heard from the reading of the Kūrma Purāṇa that before Rāvaṇa came, Sītā had been given to the care of the Fire Deity and an illusory Sītā put in her place, that it was this Sītā that Rāvaṇa carried, and the fire ordeal of Sītā after Rāvaṇa's destruction was staged only to take back the

original Sītā. Caitanya copied the page from the Purāṇa and on his return when he touched Madurai, he gave that copy to Rāmadās to assuage his grief.

On his return from Kanyākumārī he passed through the erstwhile Travancore State. There at Adi-keśava temple at Tiruvattar he found the rare manuscript of a Text called Brahma Samhitā, which is the cream of Vaiṣṇava scriptures, wherein all their dogmas and practices are given in a few words. He made a copy of it and carried it with him as a precious possession.

He went northward and visited Uḍupi the seat of Madhvācārya's religion. There the Tattva-Vādis, as the followers of that cult called themselves, at first looked down upon him as a Sannyāsin and a Māyāvādi. But seeing his devotional fervour and ecstasy at their Kṛṣṇa temple, they changed their view. To humble their pride the Master like an ignorant enquirer asked the high-priest of the Tattva-vādis what were the means to be adopted and the end to be sought by a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. The high priest gave the answer that the 'means' consisted in performing all duties as offering to Kṛṣṇa and the 'end' was the attainment of Vaikuṇṭha. Caitanya contradicted him with a scriptural quotation that a true Vaiṣṇava abjures both work and salvation. He abjures the fivefold salvation in Vaikuṇṭha, and seeks the service of Kṛṣṇa as his sole end. The High Priest could not contradict him, as this was the true Vaiṣṇava ideal.

He then passed through western and middle regions of India. In the land of the Gonds, the tribal chieftain Naoroji threatened to attack him unless he paid a ransom. Caitanya by an act of will converted him into a devotee. Not only did Naoroji give up his evil ways, but became an ascetic and a constant attendant of Caitanya.

He visited the famous Maharashtrian pilgrim centre of Paṇḍarīpuram and danced before Vittal and embraced the

image. It is said in those regions he met the great saint Tukārām and imparted Kṛṣṇa-bhakti to him. At Paṇḍarīpuram he also met Śrīraṅga Purī, who like his own Guru Īśvar Purī was a disciple of Mādhavendra Purī who had visited Navadvīp and stayed as a guest of his father. He also came to know that his elder brother Viśveśvar met with his end at Paṇḍarīpuram.

Among other important places where he halted in western India, Dvārakā was one. It was during his travels in these regions that he came across the great Text Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta, a copy of which he carried as a precious possession. Then he travelled towards Puri passing through many holy places along the banks of Taptī, Narmadā and Godāvarī until he reached Vidyānagar, the place of his great devotee and friend Rāmānanda Roy.

Return to Puri

Advising Rāmānanda Roy again to resign his Governorship and inviting him to Puri, he reached that final destination of his after two years of pilgrimage and preaching of devotion for Kṛṣṇa. He was warmly received and adored by Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma to whom he confided two glad tidings, one, that the greatest devotee he met was Rāmānanda Roy, and the second, that the most precious possessions he got were Brahma Samhitā and Kṛṣṇa karṇāmṛta, which are unrivalled Gospels of Kṛṣṇa devotion. He popularised these Texts through his devotees and scholars of Orissa and Bengal.

The return of Caitanya was a matter of great rejoicing to the people of Puri. Kāśi Miśra vacated his house where the Master was accommodated. Sārvabhauma introduced to him all the servitors of the temple of Jagannāth as also all the important citizens of the place. Among those who sought permission to see the Master, one was Pratāpa Rudra, the King of Orissa himself. Though the king was a great devotee, Caitanya refused to meet him, as he, a

Sannyāsin, should not have anything to do with men of worldly position and importance, But Sārvabhauma and others contrived to bring the king in the garb of an ordinary devotee before the Master while he was singing and dancing along with devotees before the procession of Jagannāth on a car festival day. While the Master was in a trance King Pratāpa Rudra prostrated himself before him holding his feet. The king chanted melodiously verses from the Bhāgavata which had a soul-stirring effect on Caitanya who embraced him in a high spiritual mood and thereby transmitted Kṛṣṇa-bhakti to him.

The return of Caitanya to Nīlāchal created great expectations in the minds of the devotees at Navadvip. Batches of them, numbering all together about two hundred, came to meet him and stayed at Puri for about four months, during which time they enjoyed the hospitality of the temple authorities of Puri as arranged by Sārvabhauma. On every day the Master sang and danced in ecstasy with them. He divided them into four parties with himself in the middle. Eight Dholes (drums) and thirty two cymbals played on along with shouts of Hari reverberating the quarters. A flood of devotion bathed the whole of Puri with its waves of Hari's name. The Master then began to go round the temple followed by the four Kirtan parties. Often he fell down in ecstasy and had to be supported by Rāmānanda before he dashed on the ground. Thus he passed his time blissfully in ceaseless Sāṅkīrtan with his followers.

Car Festival

When the Car Festival of the temple approached, he engaged himself and all his followers in cleaning that edifice, for which he was provided with a hundred water pots and brooms. Amidst the loud chant of Kṛṣṇa's name was performed the dusting, scrubbing and washing of the whole temple including its different shrines. Soon the day of the Car Festival came, and Jagannāth, after fifteen days of seclusion, came out in His gold embellished car as high

as Sumeru mountain with an embroidered canopy and fluttering banners around. Hundreds of fly whiskers and polished mirrors were hanging on the sides of the car. With every movement numerous mini-bells produced musical notes. The Master divided his party into seven, four preceding the car, two on both sides and one behind. It is said that the Master was miraculously seen in all the seven divisions simultaneously. He danced with all his might, manifesting in himself all the eight spiritual phases (Sāttvika Bhāvas) at the same time. His hair stood on end, with their roots in the skin bulging out; his teeth clashed together; blood oozed with the sweat flowing down his body; his lips uttered incoherent syllables; his tears moistened others as if they were being syringed; his complexion frequently changed, becoming at times rosy, at others like Mallika flower; he stood sometimes inert like dry wood and at others rolled on the ground breathing faintly and with froth coming out of his mouth. The car moved slowly amidst the vast crowds enthused by the devotional frenzy emanating from the son of Śaci. When it reached the garden of Balgandī, it stopped as it was time for offering noon Bhog to Jagannāth. Huge quantities of various kinds of food were heaped on all sides of the Deity in the car. The Master now withdrew to the verandah of the garden house and lay prostrate completely exhausted by the exertion of dancing. All the followers of Caitanya were now feasted with the delicious Prasād of Jagannāth. Again the car was to move after the Bhog, but it would not, even when pulled by elephants. But when the Master gave it a push, it rattled along. Caitanya and party accompanied the car singing and dancing until it reached the garden of Guṇḍica in the evening and the images were lifted from the car and placed on their thrones.

Jagannāth was to stay in that garden for nine days. The idea behind the procession is that every year Jagannāth, who is none other than Kṛṣṇa, wants to go from Dvārakā to Vṛndāvan where He sported with the Gopas and Gopis.

The garden of Guṇḍica was supposed to be that Vṛndāvan where he would spend these nine days in sporting in the pools and woodlands of that place. This time in the person of the Master he did this actually with the devotees as the inhabitants of Vraja. On the ninth day the Hera-pancami procession of Lakṣmī took place, and after that Jagannāth returned in the car to His usual temple. During this return procession also the Master danced and sang in supreme delight as during the onward drive.

After this, the Navadvip devotees who had already stayed with him for four months at Puri, were ordered by Caitanya to go back home, as they were all house-holders, and as their presence in Bengal was necessary to spread the new Gospel of Vaiṣṇavism he represented. He ordered Nityānanda also to go away to Bengal, with the command that along with Advaita Ācārya he should go all over Bengal for the propagation of the Gospel. Caitanya himself continued thereafter to stay at Puri for about three years, every day spending much of his time in singing and dancing before Jagannāth. Every year during the time of the car festival the devotees of Navadvip including women, came in large numbers to be benefited by his inspiring company.

Pilgrimage to Vṛndāvan

After the stay of three years at Puri he began to express a desire to go to Vṛndāvan, the spot of Kṛṣṇa's divine play. He also wanted to take his bath in the Gaṅgā and meet his mother Śacī at Navadvip on his way to Vṛndāvan. He therefore left Puri with a small entourage of devoted followers. Up to the northern border of Orissa all arrangements for the stay and boarding of the party was made at the order of King Pratāpa Rudra, but at the border he had to cross a turbulent river and pass through the country of a fanatical and wine-sipping Muslim ruler. Thanks to the inspiring personality and electrifying devotion of Caitanya, the border guards of the Muslim ruler became

devotees, and helped him in his onward journey. Then he passed through Bengal territory to the bank of Gaṅgā and proceeded in a boat, halting at Pānihāṭi and Kāmārhāṭi on the way. In all those places thousands of people thronged to meet him and the frenzy of devotion spread from him to the crowds like a contagious influence. Proceeding further, he halted at Sāntipur and stayed in Advaita Ācārya's house for ten days. He also met his mother there and assuaged her grief. He prostrated at her feet and holding them, entreated her to permit him to go to Vṛndāvan. The permission was given. He then returned to Puri and after a short stay there, started for Vṛndāvan.

His path lay through the forests of Cotā-Nāgpūr infested by wild beasts and equally wild men. He was accompanied only by one attendant, one Bālcandra Bhattācārya, who procured food stuffs and cooked it for him wherever possible. In this trip he turned wild men into Vaiṣṇavas. Still more wonderful it was that in his presence tigers and stags licked each other in amity and wild animals walked in line by his side. Elephants which came to the pools where he was bathing, when sprinkled with water, began to dance trumpeting Kṛṣṇa's name. Peacocks and other birds, on seeing him, proceeded in his company singing Kṛṣṇa's name and dancing. At Jarkand he saved the ruffianly bearish tribes of that place by teaching them faith in Kṛṣṇa. Thus he travelled through forests enjoying the glorious scenery and without experiencing any of the usual hardships and dangers of such travel, until he reached Kāśī (Banares).

At Banares

He stayed there for ten days with a devotee Tapan Mīśra whom he met at Maṇikarnikā Ghāt. There was a proud Advaita Sannyāsin called Prakāśānanda there, who had in earlier days sent some scurrilous letters to Caitanya while he was at Puri. The news of Caitanya's presence at Banares was brought to Prakāśānanda by a devoted Brāhmaṇa who described him to Prakāśānanda thus: "A

Sannyāsin has come here from Jagannāth whose glory and power I cannot adequately describe. He is big of limbs, fair as the fairest gold, long armed, lotus-eyed, endowed with all the marks of Godhead as one can see. Whoever beholds him, chants Kṛṣṇa's name. All the marks of a great Bhāgavata described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa are evidenced in him. Ever does his tongue sing Kṛṣṇa's name and his eyes run tears like the Ganges stream. Now he dances, now laughs, now sings, now weeps or at others roars like a lion. He is named Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. To see him is to know him as fashioned in God's mould." The philosopher Prakāśānanda only laughed and scoffed at all this description, and called this new arrival not a Sannyāsin but a wizard. He dismissed the whole report with the remark that his stock-in-trade of sentimentality will not sell at Kāśī, the seat of Vedānta. Caitanya did not take notice of Prakāśānanda now, but reserved him for his return journey.

He proceeded to Allahabad or Prayāga, where he bathed at the holy Trivenī. The sight of the Yamuna filled him with Kṛṣṇa consciousness, impelling him to jump recklessly into that fast flowing river.

At Brindavan

After a stay of three days there he proceeded to Mathura, the birth place of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. At the sight of the city itself he was in an ecstasy of devotion. The whole period of his stay was one of dancing, singing and entering into trances. He had here the surprising experience of meeting a Brāhmaṇa devotee who had been initiated into the devotional cult by Mādhavendra Purī, the preceptor of Īśvara Purī, his own Master. From him Caitanya learned that Mādhavendra Purī had recovered the concealed image of Gopal and installed it on Govardhana hill. He bathed at Viśram Ghat and worshipped Keśava's image at the place of His nativity. He visited all holy places at Mathura and neighbourhood like Madhu-vana, Tālvana, Kumuda, Bahuda etc. As he passed through, the cows grazing by the way

side surrounded him, lowing loudly and licked his limbs tenderly. Herds of deer gazed at his face, licked his body and followed him fearlessly. Black birds and bees sang sweetly on seeing him. The peacocks strutted dancing before him. At his coming trees and creepers put forth sprouts and shed honey like tears of joy. Branches laden with flowers and fruits bowed to his feet, as one hastens to greet a friend with presents. Singing Kṛṣṇa's name, he danced all the way. His passion of devotion on the way to Vṛndāvan grew tenfold of what it had been at Puri. It increased a thousandfold more when he reached Mathura and roamed through the woods of Vṛndāvan. This was in November 1515 when he was about 29.

Historically speaking, modern Vṛndāvan, as Jadunāth Sirkār says, is the creation of the three Gosvāmīs, Rūpa, his brother Sanātana and their nephew Jīva, who were disciples and later contemporaries of Caitanya. They were also the great savants who formulated the philosophy of Acintya-Bhedābheda, the main intellectual support of Caitanya's faith. For Caitanya, even from his Navadvīp days the mystical Vṛndāvan was the dreamland that haunted his thoughts. So in 1509 he had sent a disciple Loknāth Cakravartī as the vanguard for the renewal of Vṛndāvan of Kṛṣṇa's days, which had in the passing of time been reduced to jungles. Even when Caitanya visited the place in 1515, the place had not developed much. His visit must have helped to identify the holy spots associated with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Subsequently it was possible for the three Gosvāmīs and the Vaiṣṇavas coming from Bengal, to develop Vṛndāvan, especially after Raja Mān Singh, the general and a Governor of Emperor Akbar, began to extend his patronage.

Caitanya's stay at Vṛndāvan was short, extending for only a few months. He visited many of the holy spots there like Rādhā-kuṇḍa, Govardhan, Govinda-kuṇḍa, Kanya forest, Kālīya lake, Lauhavana, Gokula etc. Everywhere he

sang, danced and imparted Kṛṣṇa-prem to devotees. Life there was however beset with one danger for him. The sight of Yamunā was very often impelling him to throw himself into that rapid stream. His companions had to rescue him several times, and so they felt it was dangerous to permit him to stay on in Vṛndāvan longer. After a few months' stay, they therefore tactfully managed to persuade him to return to Prayāga (Allahabad).

At Prayāga

On the way they were threatened to be arrested by a party of six Pathan Muslim troopers under the idea that they were robbers. But by the Master's touch the Pathans were transformed into ecstatic devotees of Kṛṣṇa. One of them, a Pir, became Rāmdās. All became Vairagis and came to be known as Pathan Vaiṣṇavas.

Reaching Prayāga, he stayed there for ten days, every day bathing in the holy Trivenī and singing and dancing in the temple of Venī-mādhava. During his stay here, he met at the village of Ārali, seven miles away from Trivenī, Vallaba Bhaṭṭa (Ācārya), the well-known founder of the Vaiṣṇava school of Puṣṭi-mārga, and had intimate association with him.

It was here again that he met and instructed his two important disciples, Rūpa and Sanātana, who were to be his foremost apostles to formulate the philosophical structure of his doctrine of Prema-bhakti. These two learned men, coming from aristocratic families, were the ministers of the Muslim ruler of Bengal. By Caitanya's grace they got themselves released from this service, and gathered at his feet to be inspired with Kṛṣṇa-prem. It was Rūpa that could get his release first and reach Caitanya at Prayāga. Realising that he was going to be the future apostle of his church, Caitanya imparted to him many of the fundamental doctrines of his Vaiṣṇavism.

Instructions to Rūpa Gosvāmī

Among the teachings that Caitanya imparted to him, some are as follows: "True devotion to Kṛṣṇa is the rarest thing in the universe. In this Samsāra countless beings pass through 84 lakhs of births. Among these there are the animate and the inanimate. Among the former are numerous classes like birds, beasts, water-born creatures etc, human beings forming but a very small minority. Among men the largest section are either too barbarous or extremely worldly minded. A few think of God. Among them, most are devoted to Karma (ritualistic duties), some to Knowledge. Among a million devoted to Knowledge, hardly one is liberated, and among those liberated, one in a million alone is found to be truly devoted to Kṛṣṇa. For, the true devotee of Kṛṣṇa is passionless and tranquil. While the others covet enjoyment, salvation or psychic powers, Kṛṣṇa's devotees care only for whole-hearted service of Him with body, mind and soul in an absolutely selfless spirit. In the minds of those who care for salvation and other self-centred fulfilments, true love of Kṛṣṇa can never be kindled. From the culture of Bhakti, ardour is born. When ardour deepens, it is called Prema or Love.

As Prema grows it is successively called Sneha, Māna, Praṇaya Rāga, Anurāga, Bhāva and Mahābhāva. When the spiritual (Sāttvika) and extensive (Vyabhicārī) emotions mingle, love of Kṛṣṇa becomes a veritable nectar in taste. In different types of Bhaktas, the inclination (Rati) assumes five different forms, namely, the Śānta (the placid), the Dāsya (that of servanthship), the Sakhya (comradely), Vātsalya (parental) and Madhura (conjugal). Again the ardour (Rati) for Kṛṣṇa is of two kinds, the first accompanied by sense of His Godhead, and the second pure and simple. At Gokula, Kṛṣṇa displayed Himself free from His Godhead aspect, while at Mathura, Dvārakā, Vaikuṇṭha etc., His Godhead is more conspicuous. Where the sense of His Godhead is predominant, love for Him is contracted.

whereas the way of pure ardour is to disregard Godhead even when it is openly shown. In the Śānta and Dāśya emotions the former consciousness is a little kindled, but in the Vātsalya, Sakhya and Madhura it is shrunken. The pure love called unmixed (Kevala) ignores His divinity, and whenever it does recognise Him as Power, the intensity of the loving connection with him diminishes.

“Devotion to Kṛṣṇa and conquest of desires are the marks of all these types of devotees. A Śānta votary’s attachment is like an odourless flower. He has acquired only a true sense of God’s nature as the Supreme Spirit and Divinity. The Dāśya mood better develops the cognition of Kṛṣṇa as the Lord of all powers and constantly gratifies Him by serving Him with a sense of His divinity and with honour and great glorification. It has got the merits of Śānta plus service. The Sakhya Rasa possesses got the merit plus absolute trust in Kṛṣṇa, and service is characterised by reliance and free camaraderie without any inhibition of awe. So this has three qualities, including the two former. In Vātsalya or parental love there are the above three qualities plus tenderness. Such a devotee looks on Kṛṣṇa as the *protege* and himself as His patron. It has therefore four qualities and is like nectar. In the Madhura mood all the above qualities are present and in addition to them the votary serves Kṛṣṇa as a lover, offering him his or her own person. In this all the earlier four characteristics are synthesised into a complexion of its own in the form of Ātma-samarpaṇa. (complete resignation of the self).”

At Banares Again: Instructing Sanātana

After giving these teachings to Rūpa, the Master started for Kāśī (Banares). He also gave him the command that he should now go to Vṛndāvan, and after his (Caitanya’s) return to Puri, go to meet him there.

At Kāśī, Caitanya stayed at the house of Tapan Miśra as before. Shortly after his arrival, Sanātana, who managed.

to escape from the clutches of his Muslim Navāb, reached Kāśī and met Caitanya. Recognising in him the competency to be an apostle of his school, Caitanya gave him some of the most profound teachings of his brand of Vaiṣṇavism, just as he did to Rūpa. Some of these may be summarised as follows: "The soul (Jīva) is the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa has three inherent powers. Cit-Power (Consciousness), Jīva-power and Māyā-power. If the Jīva, which is in the middle (Taṭastha), looks at Kṛṣṇa, he is uplifted by the Cit-power, if he turns himself away from Kṛṣṇa, Māyā-power entangles him in Samsāra. The scripture, the Guru and introspection lead the Jīva to Kṛṣṇa. For this, Kṛṣṇa has revealed the Vedas and the Purāṇas. The Veda treats of Relation, Epithet and Needs. Relation is the attainment of Kṛṣṇa and Faith is the means for this. Epithets are His names. Service of Kṛṣṇa in the Madhura or conjugal form of love is the need or the supreme achievement for man. By serving Him thus we can attain the Relish (Rasa), of which He is the embodiment. The fruit of love is not wealth or freedom from rebirth but the beatitude that service gives.

"Kṛṣṇa in His all-embracing form dwells in the Parama-Vyoma (the Highest Space). There are endless Vaikuṇṭhas which form His retinue only. Ānanda (Bliss) inspired by Cit (Consciousness) fills the Vaikuṇṭhas. Kṛṣṇa's attributes are countless. The mind fails to comprehend His exploits. See how at one and the same time he created the natural and super-natural cowherds and kine, as described in the Bhāgavata. The millions of calves, cow-boys all assumed the form of the four-armed Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, each with a separate universe and a Brahmā adoring Him.

The Brahmā Samhitā declares that Kṛṣṇa Himself is the unequalled Supreme Deity. It means that Mahā-Viṣṇu, Padmanābha, and Kṣīrodaka-śāyin, who are the three incarnations and causes of the universe and of all

beings, are mere particles (Amśas) of Kṛṣṇa. This is only the superficial interpretation.

“Its esoteric meaning is that Kṛṣṇa has three abodes Antaḥpura, Goloka and Vṛndāvana. In the last He ever dwells with his parents, comrades etc. Here His sweet attributes, tenderness, mercy etc., are manifested to the full and Rāsa and other exploits take place. Below his eternal Abode, the universes are endless. Every universe has its own Brahmā the creator. It is said that once when Brahmā came to Dvāraka to pay obeisance to Kṛṣṇa and was introduced by the porter, Kṛṣṇa asked which Brahmā he was. Brahmā, who was under the idea that he was the only one of that designation and the universe he created was the only universe, was surprised at the query, and wanted to know what Kṛṣṇa meant by it. Then Kṛṣṇa by an act of will brought out a procession of Brahmās presiding over innumerable universes. Such is the glory of Kṛṣṇa. It is for this reason that the Vedas declare Kṛṣṇa to be the Supreme Being Himself.

Śraddhā is what has to be attained (Abhidheya). Śraddhā means firm and unquestioning faith in Kṛṣṇa. Those who have Śraddhā are qualified for Bhakti. There are different grades of Bhakti according to differences of ardour and passion. There are sixty four modes of cultivating Bhakti. Of these the most important five are: 1) society of holy men 2) Kīrtan or devotional chanting of Kṛṣṇa's name 3) listening to the reading of the Bhāgavata 4) dwelling at Mathura i.e. a holy place associated with Kṛṣṇa. 5) Reverential service of his image. The man who, renouncing desires, seeks complete shelter in Kṛṣṇa, the only one worthy of such seeking, is not indebted to Gods, Ṛṣis or the Manes. He who adores Kṛṣṇa abandoning Śāstric duties and rites, feels nevertheless no temptation for forbidden sinful ways. Theological knowledge and monasticism are not essential for development of Bhakti.

“The final fruit of Bhakti is Prema (unmotivated love). Bhakti has its intrinsic (Svarūpa) and extrinsic (peripheral) forms. The man with Śraddhā (Faith) associates with pious men. Such association gives occasion for the hearing and chanting of Kṛṣṇa’s name and development of Ruci (Taste) for the same, Ruci develops into inclination (Āsakti), which is the sprout of passion for Kṛṣṇa in the soul. When this emotion deepens, it takes the name of Prema, which is the ultimate fruit and the source of every form of bliss.

“Now hear the characteristics of one who has developed Rati. No worldly affliction can disturb the mind of such a person. He never wastes his time but always communes with Kṛṣṇa. No sensual gratification attracts him nor worldly success elates him. He is a picture of dignified humility and of passionate longing for Kṛṣṇa.

“As Prema for Kṛṣṇa develops, it takes the forms of Sneha, Māna, Praṇaya, Rāga, Anurāga, Bhāva and Mahābhāva — just as from the one source of sugarcane juice we have molasses, brown sugar, yellow sugar-candy and white sugar-candy. As these grow purer and purer, the resulting forms increase in deliciousness (Rasa), so do the above stages in the development of love. This Rasa is of five kinds - Śānta, Dāsyā, Sakhyā, Vātsalyā, and Madhura.

“Kṛṣṇa, the darling of Vraja’s lord, is the chief of lovers while lady Rādhā is at the head of Mistresses. Countless are the qualities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

“The topic of Rasa has been expounded by me elaborately to your brother Rūpa. Now you too go to Vṛndāvan and prepare the sacred code (Smṛti) of Vaiṣṇavas, discover the lost holy spots and shrines at Mathura and Vṛndāvan, and preach the Gospel of Bhakti in all ways.”

Prakāśānanda’s Conversion

Caitanya stayed about two months at Banares at Tapan Miśra’s quarters. Besides giving elaborate instructions to

Sanātana on the Vaiṣṇava doctrine, an important achievement of his on this occasion was the discomfiture and conversion of Prakāśānanda, the doyen of Advaitism, in that city of learning. He could also popularise Bhakti and the study of the Bhāgavata among Sannyāsins who were till then devoted exclusively to the doctrines elaborated in Śrī Śaṅkara's commentaries. Prakāśānanda had earlier been in the habit of reviling at Caitanya as a mere wizard or mesmerist. But when confronted with the Master at a meeting arranged by a devotee, Prakāśānanda felt completely overcome by the majesty of the former's personality and the cogency of his expositions. He abandoned his Advaita ideology and became a disciple of Caitanya. He was renamed Prabodhānanda and asked to go to Vṛndāvan and preach the Bhakti doctrine. He wrote many works, the most important of which is *Caitanya Candrāmṛta*.

Prakāśānanda's conversion and the sight of Caitanya's ecstatic Kīrtan parties accompanied with dancing and singing of Hari-kīrtan produced a revolution in the attitude of the Sannyāsins of Banares towards the Bhakti doctrine, to which they were made to turn from the exclusive study of Śrī Śaṅkara's commentaries. He preached to them that the meaning of the Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa is best understood through the commentary on it by Bādarāyaṇa himself and not through some one else who twists their meaning to suit his philosophy. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa which Bādarāyaṇa himself composed is the correct interpretation of the Vedānta Sūtras, and the Sannyāsins were exhorted to study the Bhāgavata carefully. Bhāgavata is the fountain of Bhakti in which the supremacy of Kṛṣṇa is glorified. Large numbers of people in and around Banares were converted into the Bhakti doctrine by the presence of Caitanya and his Kīrtans in that region.

Back to Puri

After accomplishing this great mission in Banares, Caitanya walked away one night with a solitary companion

back to Nīlācal via the forest of Jharkand region. His arrival at Puri came to be known in and around Puri and all his old devotees began to gather in the place. The news reached his home town at Nadia and other places of Bengal. A large party of pilgrims from Bengal also arrived. It became a practice thereafter for these Bengali devotees to go to Puri every year near about the Car Festival time, take part in the devotional programmes of the occasion and return after a stay of four months at Puri. Sometime women too came with the party, and among them was his mother Śaci also. From other provinces also devotees who heard of Caitanya's greatness came to Puri, but many could not do so, and for their benefit he sent competent disciples, inspired by Kṛṣṇa-prema, as missionaries, just as he had done with Nityānanda in regard to Bengal. As for himself he finally settled down at Puri at the age of thirty (1455), spending his time in constant adoration of Jagannāth. He did not go out anywhere afterwards. There he gave Darśan (audience) to the numerous devotees who flocked to see him.

Sanātana at Puri

One such missionary was Sanātana Gosvāmī, whom he had already instructed at Prayāga (Allahabad) and sent to Vṛndāvan. He now came to Puri via Jharkand forest to meet Caitanya again. The travails of this difficult journey brought on him an almost unbearable skin disease. So on reaching Puri he decided to end his life by allowing himself to be crushed under the wheels of the Car of Jagannāth during the time of the car festival. When he met Caitanya, the latter divined his suicidal intention and spoke to him thus: "Sanātana! If giving up life could have made one gain Kṛṣṇa, I could have sacrificed my life a million times over in a moment. It is not by courting death but by adoration that we can gain Him. There is no other way. Suicide and the like are born of Tamas, and are sinful. Among methods of adoration, the chief are the nine kinds of Bhakti spoken

of in the Bhāgavata, and of these Nāma-saṅkīrtan or chanting of the divine Name has the highest place.”

Then Sanātana replied, “You are omniscient like God. I move like a wooden machine as you turn the handle. I am a lowly wretch, wicked in disposition. What would you gain by keeping me alive?” At this Caitanya said “Your body is my property. You have given yourself up to me. How dare you think of destroying what is another’s property? Can’t you distinguish between a crime and a just deed? Your body is my chief instrument. With it I shall carry out my purposes. The exposition of the nature of devotion, the devotee and Kṛṣṇa-prema, the codifying of the duties and daily practices of Vaiṣṇavas, preaching the supremacy of devotion to Kṛṣṇa and of love for Kṛṣṇa’s service, the restoration of forgotten holy places at Mathura and Vṛndāvan, the teaching of true asceticism, the preaching of this faith at Mathura and Vṛndāvan which are my favourite places — all these I direct you to do. By my mother’s command I live at Nīlācal (Puri) instead of at Vṛndāvan, and therefore I cannot preach at Mathura in person. Your body is the means by which I want to do all these works. And you want to give it up! How can I allow it?” Sanātana bowed down in acceptance of the Master’s command. Sanātana’s body was covered with running sores and eruptions, but Caitanya embraced him, and lo! the eruptions disappeared and his body assumed a golden hue. After *dol-yātrā* festival, he was sent to Vṛndāvan with detailed instructions as to what he should do.

Humbling of Vallabha Bhatta

Another noteworthy incident that took place in these days was the humbling of Vallabha Bhatta’s (Ācārya’s) pride and his conversion. Vallabha was the well-known founder of the Puṣṭi-mārga which is mainly based on the teachings of the Bhāgavata. He had contacted Caitanya sometime back

at Allahabad and was full of admiration for his devotional fervour. So on meeting him at Puri, Vallabha made humble obeisance to him. Caitanya immediately came to understand that though the Bhatta was a great devotee of Viṣṇu, he was mightily proud of his learning, and that God had sent him there to humble his pride of scholarship. So Caitanya at first in all humility informed the Bhatta that he was not learned enough to discourse with him and undertook to introduce him to some of his learned disciples. An assembly of learned Vaiṣṇavas headed by Advaita Ācārya was next day called and introduced to the Bhatta who was very much impressed by their Vaiṣṇava effulgence. Soon after, the Car Festival took place in which the Master and his followers performed their grand Kīrtan and devotional dance. The Bhatta was spell-bound to see and hear all that. Next he went to Caitanya and told him that he was writing a commentary on the Bhāgavata and would like to read some portions of it to him. Caitanya professed his incapacity to understand such profound writings and referred him to Advaita Ācārya.

So the Bhatta went frequently to Advaita and read his commentary to him, but was always rebuffed, as Advaita slighted his writings, pointing out several mistakes in them. One day the Bhatta remarked to the Ācārya: "According to the accepted custom of the noble born, no wife will utter the name of her husband. In your philosophy you teach that Kṛṣṇa is the husband of all, and yet you advocate the loud uttering of His name. Is it not incongruous?" The Ācārya replied: "Well, Kṛṣṇa is the husband of all, and he has commanded us all, His wives, to chant His name in the Bhāgavata. Now no chaste wife will disobey the command of her husband. So we are chanting Kṛṣṇa's name." To the Bhatta this came like a powerful blow on the hood of the serpent of pride in him. Another day he boasted to Caitanya himself that in his commentary on the Bhāgavata, he has differed very much from the

interpretations of Śrīdhara Svāmī, the celebrated exegetist, and refuted his teachings. Caitanya with a pun on 'Svāmī' remarked: "One who does not follow (her) Svāmī (husband) is ranked among harlots."

All these experiences brought Vallabha to his senses. Reflection made him understand his own stupidity in assuming such an attitude of scholarly pride before a divine personality like Caitanya. So next day he went and prostrated himself before Caitanya in an attitude of true humility and was about to place Caitanya's feet on his head. Caitanya checked him and said: "You are a scholar and a devotee at the same time. When these two qualities are present, pride should not exist. But you say you have written a commentary in scorn of Śrīdhara Svāmī. I understand the Bhāgavata through Śrīdhara Svāmī. He is the world's Guru — my Guru. Your writing contrary to Śrīdhara is mere labour lost; no one will accept it. So write a commentary in his footsteps. Leave off your pride and adore the Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and you will soon attain to Kṛṣṇa's feet."

The Bhatta was till now the worshipper of child Kṛṣṇa. Now with the Master's permission he took from Gadādhara Paṇḍita initiation in the Mantra and ceremonials for the adoration of youthful Kṛṣṇa in Madhura-bhāva.*

The Evening of His Life

The last thirteen (according to some fourteen) years of Caitanya from the age of thirty were spent exclusively at Puri. During this time he was continuously attended upon by Raghunāth-dāsa and Svarūpa Dāmodara. Beyond what has been mentioned in the above paragraphs, there are not many

* This account of the humbling of Vallabha, who was the promulgator of the wide-spread Puṣṭi-mārga, may be coloured by sectarian jealousy. In the accounts of Vallabha's life by his followers, no such humbling is mentioned, although they give a description of the meeting between these great teachers in genuine cordiality.

incidents to narrate. He spent all his time in adoration of Jagannāth. It was also a period of protracted love-sickness, in which he felt himself to be Rādhā feeling intense pangs of separation from Kṛṣṇa now, and next experiencing the ecstasy of union with Him, and again losing Him and pining for Him. For long periods he was not in his usual consciousness, and behaved like one living in a world of apparent fantasy, in which the realm of Kṛṣṇa's love sports at Vṛndāvan was more real to him than the world in which his physical body was being experienced by his devotee attendants.

In these moods his behaviour looked like those of one mad to men who lived in material consciousness and could have no entry into the spiritual awareness in which he was absorbed. He raved day and night identifying himself with Rādhā, pining for Kṛṣṇa. Sometimes in agony he rubbed his face on the floor causing laceration and profuse bleeding. One night when he tried to rush out of his room in a frenzy, he dashed himself against the walls of his room and sustained serious injuries.

What looks like a strange and remarkable miracle that took place during this period of his life, is reported in Caitanya-caritāmṛta. One night he was missing from his room, the exit door of which was blocked by his sleeping attendant. When the disciples noticed this and began a search, they found his body lying unconscious in a strange condition. It was elongated into six cubits with only a thin case of skin connecting the neck and the limbs with the trunk. The frightened disciples began to chant the name of Kṛṣṇa loudly in his ears, which made him slightly conscious and soon get up with a *Hari-bōl*. The body shrank and the limbs were all united with the trunk in to its normal shape.

Another day he ran in a frenzied mood with the speed of wind to the Chatak hillock, taking it to be Govardhan hill. The disciples Raghunāth Dās and Svarūp Dāmodar who

went in hot pursuit found his body lying dead on the ground. It had become stiff and incapable of movement. Every part of the skin had swollen like a boil, the hair stood on end like Kadamba flower, and blood oozed with sweat. When the disciples chanted Kṛṣṇa's name in his ears, he again became conscious and addressed them thus: "You have brought me back here from Govardhan. You have snatched me away from viewing Kṛṣṇa's Līlā among the herds of cows and calves, with Rādhā and her handmaids on Govardhan hill. Why have you brought me away from there, only to cause me grief?" So saying he began to weep in disconsolate grief. Thus the realm of devotional ideology was more real to him than the work-a-day world of earth-bound souls.

Caught in the Fisherman's Net

Another day, without anybody's knowledge he went to the sea-side. Seeing the blue ocean, his idealised vision took it for the blue Yamunā river in which Kṛṣṇa sported with the Gopis. He rushed into the sea and was carried away by the waves. His attendants, who went in anxious search of him, came across a fisherman with his net on his shoulders, laughing, weeping, dancing and chanting Hari! Hari! The devotees stopped him and questioned him anxiously whether he had seen any man there and why he was in such a mood. He replied, "I have not seen any man there. But a dead body was caught in my net, and I carefully dragged it ashore thinking it might be a big fish. But on seeing that it was only a corpse, I was frightened. While cleaning the net I touched that bloated body and at once the spirit of the dead entered into me and I have been reduced to this state. The body lay like a corpse with a fixed stare in the eye, but at times it groaned, at others it remained inert. I am in search of an exorcist to rid me of this possession."

The fisherman then guided the devotees to the so-called corpse, which was none but Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. They

beheld him lying on the ground, huge-bodied, pale-skinned and coated with sea-sand. His limbs were abnormally long, loose and with skin flapping. They brought the body to a dry spot and cleaned it and then began to loudly sing Kṛṣṇa-kīrtans into his ear. Gradually he came to consciousness and stood up in his natural form. Then he began speaking to the devotees in a complaining tone: "Beholding the Yamunā (meaning the ocean), I went to Vṛndāvan and then found Vraja's darling sporting in the water with Rādhā and the other Gopis. I stood on the bank gazing at the scene while one of the Sakhīs (female comrades) pointed out the mysteries to me. My heart was filled with bliss at the sight; just then you have caught hold of me and with great noise brought me here. Ah! where is the Yamunā? Where Vṛndāvana? Where Kṛṣṇa? And Where the milk maids? You have destroyed that bliss."

Last Message

In such unheard-of transports of intense devotion, with alternating moods of union and separation as Rādhā had, he spent his last years at Puri. Towards the close of his life he gave the following charge to his devotee attendants. "Listen Svarūp and Rāmānanda Roy!" The Supreme healer in this Iron Age is the Sāṅkīrtan of Kṛṣṇa's name. It is equivalent to Vedic sacrifice, and the true sacrificer in it is rewarded with Kṛṣṇa's feet. Sāṅkīrtan enables us to conquer sin and the world. It creates purity of soul. Chant the name at meals, in bed, here, there, everywhere. It is not restricted to any place or time — it works everywhere. It bears the name of Sarva-śakti (omnipotence).

"Listen, Rāmānanda, to the way in which the name should be recited in order to develop a passion for it. The devotee, if high of rank, should regard himself as lowly like the grass. He should learn patience from the tree which does not cry out even when it is cut-down and which does not beg for water even when it is perishing at drought, but on the other hand gives away its possession to all who

ask of it, bears sun and rain itself but protects others from them. The Vaiṣṇava, however high, should be free from pride; he should venerate all forms of life as animated by Kṛṣṇa.. Take Kṛṣṇa's name thus and you will be inspired with Prema." He recited to them eight verses of his own composition on different moods of Bhakti, which run as follows;

*Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-
nirvāpaṇam
śreyah-kairava-candrikā-vitaraṇam
ānand'āmbudhi-varadhanam prapadam
sarvātma-snapanam param vijayate purṇ'āmrtāsvādanam
Śrī Kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam // 1*

Hail unto the hymning of Kṛṣṇa's holy Name —
A detergent that cleanses the mirror of our minds,
A down-pour that totally extinguishes the forest fire of
worldly woes,
A beneficence spreading the moonlight that brings to bloom
the lily of supreme good,
The life-breath that sustains the Bride of Enlightenment,
The hightide that swells the level of the sea of Bliss,
A veritable nectar flowing from every syllable,
A bath that cools every fibre of our being.

*Nāmnām akāri bahudhā nija-sarva-śaktis
tatr'ārpitā niyamitaḥ smaraṇe na kālaḥ/
etādṛśī tava kṛpā bhagavan mam'āpi
durdaivam īdṛśam ih'ājani n'ānurāgaḥ // 2*

Thou, with numerous names, hast infused all Thy divine
power into them,
And Thou hast put no restrictions too on the time for their
chanting.
But, O Lord, even when so abundant is Thy grace,
No taste I find in me for them, the luckless creature that

*Trṇād api sunīcena, taror api sahiṣṇunā /
amāninā mānadena, kīrtanīyaḥ sadā Hariḥ //*

Hari, the Supreme Lord, becomes the object of
remembrance to him
Who feels himself humbler than a blade of grass,
Who remains more patient than a tree in weathering all
the storms of life,
And who honours all beings without any feeling of
self-importance.

*Na dhanam na janam na sundarīm
kavitām vā jagadīśa kāmaya /
mama janmani janman'īśvare
bhavatād bhaktir ahaitukī tvayi // 4*

I seek not wealth, nor fame, nor pleasure, nor literary
greatness;
What I pray for is that I may have in life after life
Devotion to Thee with no extraneous motive behind.

*Ayi nanda-tanūja kiṅkaram
patitam mām viṣame bhav'āmbudhau /
kṛpayā tava pāda-paṅkaja-
sthita-dhūli-sadṛśam vicintaya // 5*

O son of Nanda! I Thy servant am drowning in the
treacherous sea of transmigration.
May Thou have mercy to make me adhere to Thy lotus
feet like a speck of dust.

*Nayanam galad-aśru-dhārayā
vadanam gadgada-ruddhāyā girā /
pulkair nicitam vapuḥ kadā
tava nāma-graḥaṇe bhaviṣyati // 6*

When shall that state come on me —
The state in which at the very utterance of Thy name
The eyes become flooded with flowing tears,

The speech arrested by choked-up voice,
And the body motionless and covered with horripilation!

As Radha soliloquises:

*Yugāyitam nimeṣeṇa
cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitam /
śūnyāitam jagat sarvām
Govinda-virahēṇa me // 7*

Separation from Govinda makes for me
A moment as endless as an age;
It makes my eyes shed tears as clouds in rainy season;
And the whole world appears to me as a dreary void.

*Āśliṣya vā pādaratām pinaṣtu mām
adarśanāt marma hatām karotu vā /
yathā tathā vā vidadhātu lampaṭo
mat-prāṇa-nāthas tu sa eva n'āparaḥ // 8*

Whether He embraces me or tramples on me who clings
to His feet,
Or cuts me to the quick by disappearing from view —
In whatever ways the fickle and frivolous one may torment
me,
He alone is the Lord of my heart.

Unsolved Mystery of His End

When and how Sri Caitanya passed away are not mentioned by the author of Caitanya-caritāmṛta, who stops his narration abruptly with the Lord's last sermon to disciples. But there are popular beliefs, besides some quasi-historical accounts of it, all of them calculated to throw a veil of mystery over what looks like an unpleasant end. There is a popular belief that he attained absorption with the body itself in the image of Jagannāth or of Gopīnāth. Others hold that Caitanya's drowning himself in the sea marks his end and that the incident of the fisherman rescuing him is a story added to it afterwards by the

credulous imagination of devotees. But Kṛṣṇa Dās Kavirāj confirms the rescue story as factual.

The version of Caitanya-Maṅgal of Jayānanda (1511) is this: During the car festival of the month of Āṣāḍha (June-July) in 1533 Caitanya fell down while dancing and had a serious leg injury followed by severe pain and a high rise of temperature. He told his attendant Svarūp Gosvāmī that he would leave the earth next night on the Aṣṭami Tithi. At the predicted time celestial flowers of various colours were thrown in heaps on him from the unseen, and celestials began to sing. Viṣṇu's heavenly chariot with Garuḍa figure on it came and Caitanya's spirit went in it to Viṣṇu's Abode. This took place in the temples of Toha Gopīnātha. The exact day of his demise according to Jādunath Sarkar is 14th June 1533.

Prof. Dinesh Chandra Sen, who has investigated this question of Caitanya's passing, has accepted this version of Caitanya-Maṅgal in the main. According to him death took place by about 3.00 p.m. With the permission of King Pratāpa Rudra, it was decided to bury the body in the premises of Guṇḍica-vādi adjacent to the temple. In a corner near the main pavillion of the temple a spot was cleared by the removal of pavements and the body was buried underneath, taking special care to leave no marks indicative of the burial. The temple was closed to the public for several hours till late at night. This must be the basis of the belief that he passed away at about 10.00 p.m. There is a foot print marked in the Guṇḍica-vihāra, which some presume is the place where the burial must have taken place. But Jādunath Sircār, a noted historian and a devout follower of the Caitanya cult, says in his short monograph on Caitanya's life in his translation of *Caitanya-Caritāmṛta* as follows: 'At last on 14 June 1533, his physical frame broke down under such prolonged mental convulsion and self-inflicted torments, and he passed away under

circumstances over which the piety of his biographers has drawn the veil of mystery.’*

* This veil of mystery gives credence to a shocking story that Caitanya was murdered by a conspiracy of high officers of the state and a set of jealous and offended priests of the temple — a story accepted by another authority, Ashok Chatterjee Sastri, a critic and scholar of eminence, who is the Head of the Department of Sanskrit at the University of Calcutta. He reviews the various conflicting accounts of Caitanya's end in works in Bengali and Oriya, and he comes to this conclusion, which according to him gets further confirmation from the history of Orissa at that time.

The stories of Caitanya's end are as follows: 1. One day Caitanya went to the temple according to his daily practice, and arriving at the inner sanctum, stood gazing steadfastly at the lustrous face of Jagannāth. Immediately all the temple doors were automatically closed. Caitanya prayed to the Deity and embraced His image and got dissolved into the divine body of Jagannāth. This is the widely believed account of his end. This is mentioned in Locana Dās's Caitanya-Maṅgala with the difference that the incident took place in the neighbouring Guṇḍica-vādi. 2) According to Vṛndāvana Dāsa's Caitanya Bhāgavata also this absorption into Jagannāth is mentioned. But the recently brought out (but hitherto unpublished), chapters of the same work say as follows: Caitanya one day, overpowered by the feeling of separation from Kṛṣṇa, rushed to the sanctum sanctorum to embrace the image, undeterred by the protests of the priests and the worshippers. The priests thereupon rushed after him with sticks in hand. Caitanya then ceased to be visible and went to the temple of Madanagopāla in the disguise of a mendicant. His whereabouts was not known to any one thereafter. Locana Dāsa's Caitanya-Maṅgala also gives the same story but the incident took place not in Jagannāth's temple but at the nearby Guṇḍica-vādi. 3) Jayānanda's Caitanya-maṅgala gives a more rational account. It has been given already earlier, and it has the acceptance of Prof. Dinesh Chandra Sen in the main. 4) According to Bhakti-ratnākara of Narahari Cakravārthy, Caitanya entered the temple of Gopinātha and disappeared therein never to come out again. It was in February 1534. The other view is that his demise took place in July 1533. 5) Vasudeva Dāsa's Caitanya-cakda in Oriya language gives a sensational account of his disappearance. According to him the senseless body of Caitanya was found behind the Garuḍa Pillar in the courtyard of Jagannāth's temple at about 11.00 p.m. As soon as Caitanya 'the moving Jagannāth' entered into the stationary Jagannāth' (i.e. the temple image), all the doors of the temple were closed. 6) Caitanya-Caritāmṛta, the monumental work on Caitanya by Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, is absolutely silent on how and when his life ended.

The 'veil of mystery' gives credence to the shocking story that Caitanya was murdered by some jealous priests of Puri Temple with the connivance of certain high officers of State. Prof. Ashok Chatterjee Sastri, currently the

An Estimate

Thus ended the life of one of the most remarkable personalities that the world has ever seen. He was an intellectual and scholar of the highest order who renounced that gift as a trifle in comparison with the treasure of divine love buried in the heart of man. He has not therefore left any writing beyond the eight verses we have quoted above, but in place of such records, he has left an indelibly engraved record of life on the rock of history which any one who cares for Bhakti can read. His body and mind formed a centre of magnetic power which radiated its energy into all beings that contacted him. Kṛṣṇa-prema is the name of that magnetic power. Bhakti is ridiculed by some

Head and Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Calcutta, supports this story and thinks that these conflicting and mystifying accounts of Caitanya's end make one feel they are attempts to hide an unpleasant fact. And Kṛṣṇa Dās Kavirāj's absolute silence in his elaborate account of Caitanya at Puri in his work *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is a confirmation of the above surmise. According to Prof. Sastri, Caitanya's end was connected with the contemporary history of Orissa. Pratāpa Rudra, the King of Orissa, began to spend all his time at Puri with Caitanya for his holy association. He therefore neglected the affairs of State even though the State was threatened with invasions by neighbouring powers. This provoked great discontent among his high officers, the nobility, and above all in his commander-in-chief Govindavidyādhara. Their anti-Caitanya attitude coincided with the desire of the priests of Puri Temple who found that the king's favours to them were drying up due to his attachment to Caitanya, and the income from devotees too was dwindling on account of Caitanya's presence there. The coincidence of interests resulted in a conspiracy hatched together by the two offended parties to get rid of Caitanya. One day the temple doors were closed all on a sudden and Caitanya disappeared thereafter — i.e. murdered and buried in the temple premises.

The events that immediately followed Caitanya's demise seem to confirm the surmise. Immediately after Caitanya's end, Pratāpa Rudra left Puri for Katak with his family and all his entourage. So also did all the close attendants and devotees of Caitanya migrate immediately from Puri to Vṛndāvan. Most significantly, the daily Kṛṣṇa-Kīrtana that was going on in the temple during Caitanya's days was totally stopped for fifty years.

We would like to add that temple priests have been found to be up to such heinous acts when their income and influence are seriously affected. When Rāmānuja took charge of Śrīraṅgam temple and made reforms in its management, the priests made an attempt to poison him. Fortunately the attempt was foiled.

intellectuals as vapid and insubstantial sentimentalism. But in Caitanya it was solidly substantial and at the same time irresistibly penetrative. However intellectual and strong-willed a man might be, Caitanya could soften him with the water of Kṛṣṇa-prema and thus make him pliable like clay in his hand.

Bhakti in his teaching bifurcates from the sentiment of awe which is a result of a vivid sense of divine majesty as the All-creator, and takes the form of Prema. When the sentiment of awe arising from the perception of God as the All-creator is completely submerged by the awareness of Him as embodiment of Blissfulness (Ānanda-svarūpa), then Bhakti becomes pure love, Prema. Prema is characterised by a sense of 'Ownness' with regard to the object of love. Thereby it eliminates all inhibition in one's mind in respect of His All-powerfulness and seeks one's fulfilment in serving Him — the dearest of the dear — without expectation of any return.

Kṛṣṇa with countless auspicious attributes, is for Caitanya that Archetypal divine form on which man's whole-hearted affection should be centred. This affection, being personalised, takes the colouring of all forms of human love, but resembles it only in form and not in content. It is not a sublimation of human affection; on the contrary human affections are a distortion of it. Unlike other Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas, Caitanya advocated the conjugal form of love. Rādhā of the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas is the model of it. When a royal minister, who lived an active life in the world, asked him whether there was any way of salvation for such a person like himself, Caitanya replied: "As an immoral woman thinks of her illicit lover while living in the midst of her family, so do thou silently and ceaselessly meditate on Hari while doing your earthly work."

This universal prescription of conjugal attitude is the special feature of Caitanya's teachings unlike those of other Vainava Ācāryas who speak of it only in hesitant terms,

perhaps fearing that it would lead to antinomism. But Caitanya illustrated by his rigid ascetic life that this sentiment he advocated was the antipodes of sexuality. He eschewed every form of comfort and contacts with the opposite sex. He never even allowed women devotees to come near him. They could see him only standing at a distance. Some of his disciples who made slight deviations from this discipline were mercilessly excommunicated by him. This strict avoidance of sexuality in life in any form while teaching and practising Kāma-bhakti of the illicit type — an ideal of which Caitanya himself set a glowing example — was followed to the letter in the lives of his immediate successors, the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvan and other devotees at Nadia.

But as decades passed and time made the memories of these examples dimmer and dimmer in the minds of devotees, antinomism did set in among the followers of the Caitanya sect in the form of the cults of Sahajīyas, Karta-bhājas, Vairāgi-Vairāginīs etc. Association of women even in extra-marital relationship became the common feature of these degenerate sects, bringing much disrespect to the great devotional movement. But with the progress of the 19th Century, enlightened public criticism has improved matters. Above all it has spread to the Western countries by the missionary enterprise of the leaders of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness-movement, known as Iskcon. Thus the momentum of Caitanya's effort at converting Prema-bhakti into a mass movement has expanded from the boundaries of India into foreign lands.

After Caitanya

Vṛndāvan in the North, Bengal in the East with Navadvip as the centre, and Puri in the south-east became the main seats of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism. This generated some shades of difference in the faith that developed in these regions. In Vṛndāvan Caitanya had left six learned men as Gosvāmīs (Fathers of the Church) — these being Rūpa,

Sanātana and their nephew Jīva, besides Gopāla Bhatta, Raghunātha Bhatta and Raghunātha-dāsa. A personage equally important as these, but not a contemporary of Caitanya was Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja, a disciple of the last mentioned of the Gosvāmī's and the author of the famous Bengali work Caitanya-Caritāmṛta on Caitanya's life and teachings, which has become the most influential and widely read scripture of the sect. Rūpa, Sanātana and Jīva were great Sanskrit scholars and trained philosophers, and their works, which are all in Sanskrit, formulated the Acintya-bhedā-bheda philosophy and the Kṛṣṇa theology, which form the support and intellectual structure of Caitanya's Vaiṣṇavism. Kṛṣṇa and his Śaktis and their relation form the subject of their disquisitions, although the divinity of Caitanya is fully recognised. The Gosvāmīs in turn received the recognition of all followers of Caitanya. Still theirs was more a cult of Kṛṣṇa than a Caitanya cult.

In Navadvip and in Bengal generally the development of this Bhakti tradition was more in terms of a Caitanya cult. Caitanya himself was adored as Kṛṣṇa embodying in himself Rādhā also in a single personality, as he had revealed to many in his life-time. Rāmānanda, whom Caitanya sent to Bengal to spread his brand of Vaiṣṇavism, himself became a deity co-ordinate with Caitanya. He was recognised as an incarnation of Balarāma. He was the first to install images of Caitanya for worship. Murāri Gupta in whose house many of Caitanya's mystic revelations in his Navadvip days took place, has left a book in Bengali called 'Kadāca', giving details of Caitanya's early life, and this became the basic text for many other successive writers like Kavi Kaṇapura, Vṛndāvana-dās, Ṭoṇa-dās, Jayānanda etc. These writings all deal mainly with the details of Caitanya's pre-monastic life at Navadvip. Regarding his long pilgrimages and his thirteen years life of divine ecstasy at Puri, their treatment is in a perfunctory manner. It is Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja's Caitanya-Caritamṛta that gives us all

details about these inspiring days of his life at Puri; for he was the disciple of Gosvāmī Raghunātha Dāsa who was Caitanya's constant attendant during his life at Puri and who could therefore give him all details about that period of Caitanya's life.

All the Ācāryas of other schools of Vaiṣṇavism dealt with in this book have left very learned writings, most of them in the shape of commentaries on the important Vedānta texts and independent writings or handbooks on their doctrines. Caitanya was too God-intoxicated for this, and his renunciation began with the throwing away of his recondite writing on Nyāya into the Gaṅgā. His personal life and conversations with his disciples were the seeds from which a very varied and voluminous literature at the hands of the above-mentioned scholar disciples and devotees grew.

But Vaiṣṇavism of a kind prevailed in Bengal even long before the days of Caitanya. A king of a certain region of Bengal named Candravarman, a contemporary of Samudra Gupta (340-380), styles himself as a servant of Cakra-svāmin — a name of Viṣṇu who has Cakra or discus as one of his weapons. Many folk songs depicting the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa existed, but the mass of that literature has been lost. The earliest literary composition to refer to Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is Hala's Prākṛt work called Gītā-Saptaśati, attributed to the 2nd century. To what extent this work prevailed in Bengal cannot be ascertained. Later Vidyāpati and Caṇḍidās composed many romantic songs depicting the love between a hero and heroine, which was given a religious colour as the love of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. But serious literature with far-ranging implications and forming the basis of Caitanya's devotionism, was the Bhāgavata Purāṇa in Sanskrit which is traced today to a date not earlier than the 8th century. There was also the famous composition of Jayadeva called Gīta-govindam, which is suited for singing and dancing, and which is now a musical composition recognised all over India.

Caitanya himself did not contribute any writing except the eight verses we have given towards the end. He was too God-intoxicated for any literary effort. But he introduced two important texts of the Kṛṣṇa cult that he came across during his pilgrimages. These are Līlā-śuka's Śrī Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛtam and Brahma-samhita which became precious texts of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism. What Caitanya did not do on the literary side, was accomplished by his learned disciples, the Vṛndāvan Gosvāmīs etc.

The Vṛndāvan Gosvāmīs wrote in Sanskrit and the others in Bengali. An Ācārya of the Vedānta is expected to write a commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa. Neither Caitanya nor the Vṛndāvan Gosvāmīs had done this. This deficiency was however made up by Bāla Deva early in the 18th century by the production of such a commentary under the name Govinda Bhāṣya, which raised Caitanyaism to the full level of a Vedānta philosophy.

More important than these learned works, Caitanya's mission was fulfilled by the development of popular music, dance and devotional dramas through which the refinement of the Vaiṣṇava spirit was directly transmitted to the masses. From the very beginning of his life, his tendency was to break the rigid laws of caste and custom and cater to the needs of the poor and the depressed. In those days of illiteracy, books could benefit only a small section of the elite, but Caitanya's technique of propagating Bhakti through mass Kīrtans attended with dance and music, both vocal and instrumental, was an effective way of audio-visual education that is becoming popular in these sophisticated days. A large body of Padāvalis, which are compositions suited for recital and exposition both in Sanskrit and Bengali, developed in the hands of talented poets like Narahari Sarkar, Sivānanda Sen and Vasudeva Ghosh and others. Innumerable folk songs of great popular appeal also came into vogue. All these made Caitanya a Deity, the embodiment of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, and his adoration became the religion of a very large section of the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal.

In concluding his account of Caitanya's life in his translation of Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Jadunath Sirkar gives the following estimate of his contribution: "Caitanya insisted on the unity of Godhead underlying the multitude of idols of popular worship. He taught that God can be realized only by means of a love ardent and all-absorbing as the conjugal passion.... His hearers were exhorted to work out their salvation, each man for himself, by strenuous holy living and not to imagine that it can be won through any other man's exertions or the mechanical performance of any ritual. Like many other Hindu reformers of medieval times he admitted all believers to his fold without distinction of caste or rank.

"But the goal of Caitanya has been lost. His Church has passed under the control of Brāhmin Gosvāmīs who have developed a very subtle and esoteric theology in which the brain has suppressed the heart. Today the Vaiṣṇava sect forms two sharply divided sections — an emotional but morally indisciplined rabble at the base and a keenly intellectual but cold and fastidious priesthood at the top, without any link between them."

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Philosophy

Acintya - Bhedābheda

Introduction

Most people generally identify Vedānta with the Kevalādvaita (Absolute Non-dualism) of Śaṅkara: While a paramount place has to be given to this system as the first systematic presentation of the Upaniṣadic teachings, the truth is that it marks but the beginning of the formulation of Vedāntic doctrines from different angles of philosophic and spiritual insight. Among the later interpretations of the Vedānta, those by the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas (Teachers) form the most important, both from the point of view of philosophy and of the impact they have had on the religious life of the people.

Vaiṣṇava philosophers are divided into five main schools. Most of them differ from Śaṅkara, not always by denying Non-dualism as the teaching of the Upaniṣads but in their view as to what brand of Non-dualism they inculcate. The important differences may in brief be set forth thus: 1) In Śaṅkara's Non-dualism the supreme spiritual reality is the attributeless, indeterminate and acosmic Absolute. For the Vaiṣṇavas it is the Supreme Person who is the repository of all auspicious qualities and the Lord and Master of creation 2) Śaṅkara accepts God but He is distinguished from the Absolute: He is only a provisionally accepted entity who is sublated as an unreal attribution in the course of the discriminatory process. Īśvara may be the highest in the scale of relative values of the Vyāvahārika (phenomenal)

plane. But everything of the phenomenal plane, the lowest as well as the highest, is Mithyā (mere appearance). They sink and disappear into oblivion from the Paramārthika or the ultimately real point of view of Truth. For the Vaiṣṇavas, God is the Ūltimate Reality revealed by the Vedāntic Texts, and there is no Absolute apart from Him. For, He includes everything in His being, or there is no other entity superior to Him or having independent existence beside Him. No sublation of Him in any sense is acceptable. 3) In Kevalādvaita the Jīva in its essence, i.e. after the elimination of the adjuncts of body, mind, egoism, etc., and Īśvara (God) after the elimination of His adjuncts, namely, His power of cosmic manifestation, constitute the identical non-dual Brahman. The adjuncts in both cases are unreal. For the Vaiṣṇavas the Jīva is only an aspect, part, potency or attribute of Brahman, distinguishable but not necessarily different. Some hold him to be distinct both in bondage and in salvation, while some others maintain, that the distinction will cease with liberation when the Jīva merges in Brahman as a river does in the ocean. This latter type of thinkers accept the doctrine that Upādhi or adjunct separate Jīvas from Brahman only in ignorance. The adjuncts are dissipated on the attainment of knowledge. Other schools give a distinct identity for Jīva both in ignorance and liberation. 4) For Kevalādvaita creation is unreal. If it is accepted in the Upaniṣads, it is done only provisionally, to deny its reality afterwards. For the Vaiṣṇavas creation is a real process in every sense of the term. 5) According to Kevalādvaita, Samsāra or the state of bondage and release from it, are only unreal assumptions resulting from ignorance, whereas all Vaiṣṇavas hold these to be real states. Thus, bondage is a real state and release from it is a real achievement to be had by appropriate means. 6) Jñāna or knowledge of the unity of the Ātman (self) with Brahman is the means of salvation in Kevalādvaita while the Vaiṣṇavas hold Bhakti (deep-rooted devotion and dedication to God) to be the means. 7) Release from

Samsāra or achievement of bodilessness is the goal of Kevalādvaitins, whereas service of the Supreme Being in His eternal Realm is the ideal of most of the Vaiṣṇava schools. 8) Kevalādvaita is essentially a system of metaphysics with a spiritual import. Its alliance with cults and theologies is very loose, although in practice the majority of the followers of the system adhere to one or other of the prevailing theologies as a provisional discipline. All Vaiṣṇava philosophers on the other hand, are philosophers and theologians as well, as their systems centre upon personalistic conceptions of Reality supported by philosophical structures. They are identified with certain cults.

Caitanya School

Among the five schools of Vaiṣṇavism, the Bengal school was inspired by the great religious teacher Śrī Caitanya who lived from 1486 to 1533. Vaiṣṇavism in a rudimentary form did exist in Bengal even before him, and the songs of devotee-singers like Caṇḍidās and Vidyāpati had already inspired the country by their thrilling compositions on Divine love. Another centre radiating Vaiṣṇava devotionism was Jayadeva's famous musical compositions dealing with the spiritual romance of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa mysticism. It was, however, the advent of such a mighty personality as Caitanya that gave a boost to the sect. Caitanya himself did not, however, take part directly in literary or philosophical activity. He was too full of God-love to undertake any such work. His time was spent in Divine ecstasies, in Saṅkīrtanas or singing of God's Name and excellences, and in conversing on God-love with devotees who went to him for the attainment of spiritual insight. The object of his love was Kṛṣṇa who, on the basis of certain texts in the Bhāgavata, is accepted not merely as an Incarnation of Viṣṇu but as the Supreme Godhead Himself, of whom Viṣṇu is only a partial emanation. The

pattern of love popularised by him was of the conjugal form represented in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa through the love of the Gopikas of Vṛndāvan for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Though he did not write or preach any systematic philosophical doctrine, the conversations he held with devotees and disciples were in themselves profound enough for the development of a philosophy and theology centering on him. What he failed to give in writing, he made up by the impact his grand and ecstatic personality made on talented disciples. He was followed by several scholarly saints and philosophers who have presented to the world a distinctive form of metaphysics and theology that has come to be known as the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism or as Acintya Bhedābheda philosophy. Among these, mention must specially be made of the names of the illustrious Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvan—Sanātāna, Rūpa, and Jīva, and of Bālaḍeva in later times.

II

Its Metaphysics: The Absolute Person

The system claims itself to be Advaya Vāda, a doctrine of the one without a second, according to which Sat-Cid-Ānanda Para-Brahman, identified with Kṛṣṇa, is the one Supreme Reality. Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Person, indivisible, all-inclusive and unlimited by any other entity beside Him. He has an ideal form, the brilliance of which is what the Advaitins of Śāṅkara School call the unqualified Impersonal Brahman. This is illustrated by Kṛṣṇa's statement in the Gītā "I am the support of Brahman" XIV.27. Just as the brilliance of the sun is supported by the disc of the sun, so is Brahman of Kevalādvaita which is only the Tanu-bhā, or the surrounding brilliance of the Consciousness-Bliss of Kṛṣṇa supported by Him. The epistemological theory behind this doctrine is this: That the Nirvikalpaka Jñāna (unmodified, indeterminate awareness) is the ultimate truth and that the Savikalpaka (definite awareness) is false in the last analysis is the thesis in

Śaṅkara's system of thought. The position is reversed in this system. The indefinite awareness of anything is the first and most primitive and, therefore the most peripheral, understanding of anything. When awareness becomes definite, clear and defined, then only anything is fully understood. This is true with regard to the Supreme Reality also. The Bhagavān, the Divine Personality, clear and defined, is, the core of Reality, and the indefinite and unmodified Brahman can be only His peripheral brilliance (Tanu-bhā). An Infinite Person may be a contradiction in the sphere of space and time, but it is not so in regard to Kṛṣṇa, as He is the transcendental spiritual Reality within whom time and space are included. Besides, His form is not like the forms in space and time. His is a multiform — a form which can take any other form. In Him there is no absolute distinction between spirit and form.

Theory of Change Without Change of Substratum

It may be asked how the non-duality of the Supreme Reality can be understood in relation to the experience of multiplicity experienced in everyday life. Every school of Vedānta has got its own answer. In Śaṅkara's system the manifold is explained away as an illusory manifestation superimposed by ignorance on the non-dual substratum. In the system of Rāmānuja, the manifold is accepted as adjectively or organically related to Īśvara (God), who along with the manifold, forms the complete whole or the Absolute including in itself all that exists. In the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism the relationship accepted is that of Śaktimat and Śakti, powerholder and power. An entity and its power are inseparably related and have an identity of being in spite of the difference that could be made of them. For example, fire and its potency expressing as heat and light, form an identical entity though the distinction between them is also simultaneously evident. Similar is the case with the Supreme Reality (Kṛṣṇa) and His Śakti or Potency of world manifestation. Their relationship is one of identity

in difference, both the terms of the relationship being equally real. The Supreme Person remains transcendental while His Śakti projects the world of multiplicity. The multiplicity is in, and of, Śakti, and does not affect the Śaktimat. At the same time Śakti, as the potency of the Śaktimat, the Supreme Person, has no independent existence apart from Him and constitutes an identical Non-dual Whole with Him. Non-duality of the ultimate Reality is thus secured through the concept of Śakti which stands distinct from the Śaktimat as the source of the manifested worlds, while at the same time remaining non-different from the transcendent Śaktimat. Manifestation is real and not in any sense illusory. It is changeful, but not illusory. The Supreme Reality can have no truck with falsity in any sense.

Here the following questions will be raised: If Śakti changes in a real sense into the manifold, it must surely be affected by that change. Consequently, Śakti being one with the Śaktimat, the modification of Śakti arising from transformation must be considered as modification of Śaktimat Himself. In other words, the Supreme Reality loses its character. God ceases to be God as in all forms of Pantheism. It is to avoid this that in Śaṅkara's system of Advaita the doctrine of apparent (illusory) transformation, known technically as Vivarta Vāda as opposed to Pariṇāma Vāda (real transformation), is posited. For, when the manifold is only a super-imposition on the Ultimate Reality, that Reality, though forming the substratum of the illusory perception, is not affected by it. But this show of consistency is achieved by inconsistency in other respects. If the transformation is only apparent, this apparency must be the misreading of some one. Either it must be done by the Supreme Reality Itself or by some consciousness other than It. Non-duality precludes the existence of any other consciousness. Hence ignorance, which leads to illusion, must accrue to the Supreme Reality alone. It will thus be seen that the very defect that is sought to be circumvented, namely the corruption of the Supreme Reality

by real change, recoils on this doctrinal position by loading the Supreme Reality again with ignorance. Nothing therefore is gained by this show of logic. So the Bengal School of Vaiṣṇavism rejects Māyā-Vāda and its offspring, the doctrine of Super-Imposition, and stands for the real transformation of Supreme Reality through His Śakti.

Acintya-bhedābheda

But the question originally posed still stands. If Śakti is identical with Śaktimat, will not the real transformation of the former be equivalent to the transformation of the latter also? In reply to this the Bengal School of Vaiṣṇavism propounds the doctrine of Inconceivable Identity-in-difference (Acintya-bhedābheda). Śakti is both identical and different from Śaktimat. It is because of this element of difference that transformation of Śakti does not affect the Śaktimat. At the same time the element of identity makes the Supreme Reality Non-dual even in the midst of difference. How these two contradictory features can co-exist is not attempted to be explained logically. For this reason it is designated as Acintya — alogical or incomprehensible by thought. It means logic, which is ultimately based on sense experience, cannot bring it within its laws and it has therefore to be accepted as a fact transcending human understanding. At the most it can be said that the idea of the cause being affected and exhausted by change, is the characteristic of relative causes bound by space and time. To apply this rule to the ultimate cause, the Cause of all causes, who has this special capacity of unaffectedness in the midst of change, is illegitimate.

To avoid admitting this inexplicability of the transformation of the non-dual Reality into the many, Kevalādvaita invokes the doctrine of apparent transformation, which lands, as shown earlier, in attributing ignorance to non-dual Reality. An attempt is made to get over this derogatory status of the Supreme Reality by

claiming that ignorance (Ajñāna) in relation to the individual alone, is a disvalue. With reference to the Supreme Reality ignorance is denoted by another more dignified name. Māyā, a mysterious power of manifestation which cannot be described categorically either as Sat (existing) or as Asat (non-existing), or as Abhāva-rūpa (having only a negative entity). Māyā itself thus become Acintya (alogical and inexplicable), being both real and unreal according to Śāṅkara Vedānta. It makes Māyā a greater mystery, than Brahman Himself. The Bengal School of Vaiṣṇavism, however, points out that Māyā, being the power of the Non-dual Reality, can in no sense be unreal, and that what is Acintya (alogical and inexplicable) is the relation of Identity-in-difference between the Non-dual Reality (Śaktimat) and Māyā, its power of manifestation (Śakti) as the many. Being contradictory, their co-existence as one and the same entity cannot be understood logically. Such co-existence is however a fact of Divine life revealed by scripture and independent of any logical inference. Just like a fact of material life, for example that sugar is sweet, it does not require the support of logic. To those who still want a logical way of stating, it can be spoken of as a logical presumption (Arthāpatti), an inexplicable hypothesis, without accepting which, the non-duality of the Supreme Reality and the fact of His simultaneous manifestation as the many cannot be understood.

The advantage of this approach to the problem is that according to it life, its values, spiritual efforts, the spiritual goal of freedom etc., are accepted as factual, and the average man is thereby better placed to work for the attainment of his spiritual goal than under the gospel that seeks to overcome an actually experienced problem by denying its actuality and thus converting spiritual striving into a kind of mockbattle. Man is realistic in his outlook, and unless the means and the goal are apprehended as real, he will fail to put his best into his striving. To be told that there is no creation, no bondage, no real spiritual

striving and no real liberation, will only sound a puzzle and prove a paralysing inhibition to the average man with his inborn realistic outlook. When you feel the pain of a thorn that has entered into the flesh, the denial of pain will have no effect. We have to take another thorn and remove the one in the flesh, if we are to get relief.

III

Its Theology: Kṛṣṇa as Supreme Being

The Acintya Bhedābheda conception of Non-duality provides the metaphysical background for this school to formulate its theology. The non-dual Supreme Reality is identified with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, as revealed in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which is accepted by this school as the most authoritative scripture. It is looked upon as the best elucidation of the Veda. Its authority rests on the view that Vyāsa who codified the Vedas and produced the Vedānta Sūtras, himself composed the Bhāgavata in order to elucidate the abstruse meaning of the Vedic revelation. The Bhāgavata speaks of Kṛṣṇa as 'Bhagavān Svayam' i.e. the Supreme Being Himself. Generally in all other Hindu religious cults, Kṛṣṇa is one of the incarnations of Viṣṇu, but the Bengal School of Vaiṣṇavism makes Kṛṣṇa the Godhead and Viṣṇu one of His emanations, on the strength of the above-mentioned text. He is Sat-cid-ānanda, the Para-brahman—the Supreme Reality who is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. But unlike in the non-dualistic Vedānta of Śaṅkara, he is the Absolute Person. Though the formless and all-pervading Brahman also is accepted, the Divine form is not a mere sublatale expression of it. The form is the more fundamental and Brahman as the formless is only His aura. He has countless forms, in fact as many as devotees care to invoke Him in, but this school accepts one form as His original and transcendental form. That is of Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd Boy of Vṛndāvan, as described in the Bhāgavata. Though the Essence of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, He none the less bears the

form of an adolescent of transcendent beauty, having two hands and feet, blue complexion like that of a fresh rain cloud, eyes resembling full-blown lotus petals, and yellow wearing clothes resembling lightning in its brilliance. Being pure Being- Consciousness- Bliss (Sat-cid-ānanda -vighraha), He has no distinction of body and soul, of form and essence. The senses and limbs of His divine form (Śrī vighraha) too are not to be differentiated from His essence. They have nothing in common with the material organs of human beings. A material form can be only in one place at a time, and it is identical with itself and different from others. But the form of Kṛṣṇa is an all-inclusive multi-form, which can appear as Kṛṣṇa, or in any other form, in all places simultaneously. Not only His two-handed form but His dress, His residence, His playmates like the cowherds and cowherdesses are all eternal forms without any material limitations and can appear anywhere to the eyes of a devotee on whom He bestows His grace. This two-handed form of Kṛṣṇa has been revealed to sages who have attained to the required stage of purification and resignation. It will still be revealed to kindred spirits. It has therefore to be accepted as factual and not a mere subjective fancy.

The Formful Higher than the Formless

The reasoning behind the acceptance of a form as the Supreme Reality has already been given. The formless, changeless, indefinite and all-pervasive and attributeless intuition of the Absolute represents only a peripheral understanding just like the initial, vague apprehension of an object (Nirvikalpaka-jñāna). Definiteness being the sign of clarity and completeness of understanding, the intuition of the Supreme Person with an ideal form of Bliss-Consciousness represents a core understanding of Reality. For Kṛṣṇa, who is Pure Spirit, form is no limitation as it is for material objects. He is the central core of Existence. Knowledge-Bliss, of whom the unmodified Nirguṇa Brahman is the all-pervading brilliance, just as limitless light is of

the condensed essence of its source, the sun. Kṛṣṇa again is Rasa — Bliss or Mādhurya (Sweetness) — with Aiśvarya (majesties) suppressed and obscured by it. Mādhurya is the highest value, Aiśvarya (majesty) comes only after that. So those who adore the very core of the Supreme Reality practise devotion to Kṛṣṇa as all-sweetness (Mādhurya), and not to His Aiśvarya aspects represented by Paramātmān, called also as Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇa etc. These Aiśvarya aspects, which are only partial revelations of Kṛṣṇa, form the object of adoration in several other schools of Vaiṣṇavism.

They are not, however, different from Kṛṣṇa, but His partial manifestations, with Aiśvarya predominating and Mādhurya, the highest spiritual value, as only subsidiary, Kṛṣṇa, however, embodies all the Bhagas, the sixfold Divine majesties of Aiśvarya (power), Dharma (goodness) Yaśas (glory), Śrī (splendour), Jñāna (knowledge) and Vairāgya (detachment), for which reason He is called the Bhagavān. But over and above all these, He is pure Bliss, of which there is only a partial expression in His aspect as Paramātmān and much less in Brahman, the formless, indeterminate and pervasive spiritual aura of His. It is on this ground that the followers of this school of thought maintain that the Brahman-intuition of the Advaita Vedānta is an initial step in which spiritual aspirants are stranded if they are not properly guided by the Bhakti Sāstra. The authority quoted for this gradation of the Supreme Being into Brahman, Paramātmān and Bhagavān as the progressive and hierarchical structure of the Non-dual Reality is the Bhāgavata Verse: "What the truth-knowers call the Non-dual consciousness, even that is spoken of as Brahman, Paramātmān and Bhagavān" (Bg.1-2-11).

Kṛṣṇa And His Threefold Śaktis

It has already been pointed out that the Non-duality of the Supreme Reality, Kṛṣṇa, is sustained with the aid of the conception of His Śakti or Potency of manifestation

which stands to Him in the relationship of inconceivable identity-in-difference. Śakti is not different from Him, just as the burning property of fire is not from fire. Śakti effects all transformations while Kṛṣṇa remains unaffected, as the transcendent and immanent presence supporting Śakti.

Śakti has three aspects — Svarūpa Śakti (Innate Potency), Tāṭastha Śakti (Peripheral or marginal potency, also called Jīva Śakti or (Jīva Potency), and Bahiraṅga Śakti (Extraneous Potency). Bahiraṅga Śakti is the power of cosmic manifestation. The cycles of creation (Sṛṣṭi) and dissolution (Pralaya) of all the fourteen spheres, as also of the gross and subtle elements which constitute these spheres and the bodies of Jīvas inhabiting them, spring from the transformations of this last mentioned Śakti. It is called Bahiraṅga or extraneous because it is insentient gross matter (Prakṛti) constituted of the three Guṇas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, and only the attribute of Sat (existence) characteristic of the Supreme Reality is seen to be manifest in it. So though, as His Śakti, it is one with Him, it is devoid of Consciousness (Cit) and Blissfulness (Ānanda) that form the core of His Being. It is based on Him only indirectly, and its transformations do not affect His transcendent Being in any way. For this reason its relation with Him is extraneous, in contrast to that of His Svarūpa Śakti (Inherent Potency of Bliss). Being thus of the nature of self-alienation, it is also called Māyā Śakti. But the term Māyā in this system carries no significance of illusoriness as in Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta. It is a real power inherent in the Supreme Reality, and all its effects are real. But it binds Jīvas (centres of consciousness) in materiality and makes them forgetful of their Divine affinities. It is the Lord's power by which the process of creation is originated and sustained. In contrast to it stands the Lord's Redemptive Power known as Cit Śakti, which, being the same as Svarūpa Śakti, will be discussed under that concept.

Subtler than the Māyā Śakti of the Lord and closer to Him in relationship is the Jīva Śakti, also called Tāṭastha

Śakti. It is constituted of the countless centres of Consciousness called Jīvas (life monads) who are expressions of His attribute of Consciousness or Cit. The Jīva, in this system is an Energy or Potency of the Lord, His power of self-multiplication, just as matter is His power of material evolution. It is called Taṭastha (literally meaning 'situated on river bank'), because just 'as the bank of a river links the liquid waters with the dry land and partakes of the characteristics of both, the Jīvas too, as centres of consciousness, stand between, and partake of the nature of, the two other Powers of the Lord — His material power known as His Māyā or Bahiraṅga (extraneous) Śakti on the one hand, and His spiritual power called Cit, or the Antaraṅga (inward), or Svarūpa (inherent) Śakti, on the other. Being in contact with both, the Jīva gets into the state of bondage (Samsāra) when Māyā Śakti dominates over him and makes him purely body-minded, but when through the practice of devotion and the grace of the Lord, the Jīva is enfolded by the Svarūpa Śakti (the same as Cit Śakti) of the Lord, he attains to his higher spiritual evolution.

The Jīva in this system is not equated with Brahman (Non-dual Reality), but is regarded as both identical and different from Him. The Jīvas in their totality form His Jīva Śakti, and it is one with Him in the sense that Śakti (Power) and Śaktimat (Power-holder) are one and not different. Each Jīva, however, is an intelligent subject corresponding to the 'I' sense and retains his individuality through all changes occurring in physical embodiment. It is self-luminous (Svayam-prakāśa), conscious (Cetāna), subject to ego-sense (Ahamartha), different in different bodies (Pratyak-kṣetra-bhinna), atomic, (Aṇu), ever-pure (Nitya-nirmala), a centre of knowledge, action and enjoyment, and endowed with a natural tendency towards Paramātmān. Though it is called atomic it should not be conceived as a material atom, as it is not subject to spatial measurement. The expression is used to indicate that it is an individuation of Divine Power and has its distinctiveness

as a monad. Just as the sparks thrown out by a fire share its nature in a fragmented condition, so also the Jīvas embody a very limited quantum of the Bhagavat's nature as Existence- Knowledge- Bliss. But they are never identical with Him either in bondage or liberation. They are His dependants, related to Him as His Taṭastha Śakti (peripheral potency). Though the Jīva, coming under the influence of Māyā Śakti, forgets his spiritual nature and gets identified with materiality, he never loses his essential spiritual attributes. They only get contracted in the state of ignorant identification with the body under the influence of Māyā. When the obstructing veils of Māyā Śakti are removed through Bhakti (devotion), they become sharers of the blissful nature of the Svarūpa Śakti of the Bhagavat. But they always retain their individuality even in liberation and become Parikāras or attendants of the Lord in the hierarchy of the spiritual world. They may lose their sense of individual existence in the bliss of Divine communion but this does not mean that their distinctive entity is lost.

Svarūpa Śakti in the Three Aspects

The third and most fundamental potency of the Bhagavān is called Svarūpa Śakti, meaning innate or essential potency. It is also known as Antaraṅga (inward) in contrast to Bahiraṅga (extraneous) Śakti, and as Cit (Spiritual) in contrast to the same Śakti as Māyā (material) Śakti. While all these three Śaktis mentioned are based on the Bhagavat and have no existence apart from Him, the first two are peripheral in different degrees to Him: it is only the Svarūpa Śakti that is directly associated with Him. The other two, Māyā (Bahiraṅga) and Jīva (Taṭastha) Śaktis, are displayed by Him only indirectly in His role as the Paramātmān who, as mentioned earlier, is a partial expression of Kṛṣṇa, embodying only his Aiśvarya (Lordliness) but not His Mādhuryā (Sweetness or Blissful nature). Māyā functions under the direction and control of the Paramātmān, while the Svarūpa Śakti of the Bhagavān transcends the working

of Māyā. The Jīva Śakti, too, is directed by the Paramātmā while it is in its embodiments in material nature and therefore allied to Māyā then; but, as stated earlier, through Bhakti it breaks the hold of Māyā and comes under the influence of Svarūpa Śakti. It is because of its intermediate situation and status that it is called marginal (Taṣṭha).

Svarūpa Śakti has three aspects known as Sandhinī, Samvit, and Hlādinī, corresponding to the Supreme Being as Sat (Existence), Cit (Consciousness) and Ānanda (Bliss). Sandhinī, corresponding to the attribute of Sat (Existence), is the energy of the Lord by which He sustains His own existence as also of the Jīvas and the worlds. Samvit, corresponding to Cit (Consciousness), is His knowledge-nature by which He has self-knowledge and also knows others and endows others with knowledge. Hlādinī, corresponding to Ānanda (Bliss), is the energy by which He enjoys His own innate Bliss and makes others enjoy the same. Just as the psychological and physical formations of the material world are formed by the combinations of the aspects of material Prakṛti known as Śattva, Rajas and Tamas, the manifestations of Svarūpa Śakti in different degrees and combinations constitute the stuff and energies of the spiritual dimension. It is called Śuddha Śattva, self-luminous and untainted spiritual element, as distinguished from ordinary material Śattva forming an aspect of Māyā Śakti along with Rajas (dynamism) and Tamas (inertia). Material Śattva is tainted with Rajas and Tamas and is not self-luminous. It is subject to change and limitations of space and time. Śuddha Śattva is the opposite of this and knows no limitations and has no taints. It is the subtlest, immaterial energy of Intelligence and Bliss. When Sandhinī predominates, Śuddha Śattva expresses itself as Ādhāra Śakti—the root energy which manifests as, and sustains, the Heavenly Residence of the Bhagavat. The dominance of Samvit generates the manifestation of Śuddha Śattva called Ātma Vidyā or self-knowledge which sustains

all forms of spiritual consciousness. When Hlādinī predominates over the other elements, the spiritual energy expresses itself as Guhya Vidyā or pure loving devotion (Prema Bhakti).

Of all the three Śaktis, the Svarūpa Śakti is the most intimate and fundamental nature of the Bhagavān, and of the three aspects of Svarūpa Śakti, Hlādinī, the energy of Bliss, is its essence. The scriptures have described the Supreme Reality, Kṛṣṇa, as Rasa which means the same as Ānanda or Bliss. The concept of Bliss becomes meaningful only when it is a matter of self-realisation or realisation in an object. To speak of Brahman as Bliss in the sense that it is without sorrow, as certain philosophers do, is meaningless, because even a stone, being without sorrow, can be described as bliss in that sense. Bliss without self-awareness and awareness of the others is meaningless and indistinguishable from mere inertness. So Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Reality, is not only Rasa but also Rasika, the enjoyer of Bliss. He is an enjoyer in two ways — both in His identity with, and in His difference from, His energy of Bliss (Hlādinī), which is the essence of His Svarūpa Śakti. Self-enjoyment of Himself as Bliss is called Svarūpānanda of enjoyment in identity. Distinguished from this is His enjoyment of His own Potency of Bliss (Hlādinī), which is known as Śaktyānanda; for, as His Śakti, Hlādinī, is both identical and different from Him: Hlādinī the essence of His Svarūpa Śakti, is therefore personified as a Female, Rādhā, forming the counter-whole and Eternal Consort of Kṛṣṇa. The Supreme Reality is therefore represented as Kṛṣṇa embraced by Rādhā. The function of the Śaktis of Kṛṣṇa is to carry out His will and contribute to His sportive manifestations, which form the expression of His essential nature as Bliss. The whole of the cosmic manifestation and withdrawal is a sport which He performs through His Bahiraṅga (extraneous) Śakti, known also as Māyā. Basically it is like a dance or circular movement of electrons round a nucleus, and of planets and galaxies round

a central source of attraction. The evolution of life and the progress of the soul in higher regions is His sportive manifestation through His Jīva Śakti, also called Tāṭastha Śakti. The recurring cycles of Samsāra that carry Jivas through repeated births and deaths until emancipation, is the dance of sportive Kṛṣṇa at the level of this intermediate Śakti.

Goloka the Supreme Abode

The blissful and sportive nature of Kṛṣṇa is most conspicuously manifest in His eternal dance with his Svarūpa Śakti in the transcendental realm of Goloka. The other Śaktis, though basically dependent on Him, are not directly in communion with Him. They are under the direction of His lower manifestation described as Paramātmān whose abode is the Vaikuṇṭha. Paramātmān is the expression of Aīśvarya (majesty), whereas Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Reality, is in addition Mādhurya (Sweetness or Bliss). The energy of Bliss, Hlādinī, alone is in direct communion with Him. The Hlādinī, as it has already been stated, is personated as Rādhā who is engaged in eternal service of Kṛṣṇa, thus affording Him what is called Śaktyānanda, the realisation of His own Bliss through the service rendered to Him by of His Śakti(Hlādinī). Rādhā who is His Svarūpa Śakti, and therefore the foremost of His Servitors, expands herself into thousands of Gopis. Rādhā and her Gopis have no thought of self and form the highest expression of perfect self-effacement through their loving service of Kṛṣṇa. As His Śaktis, the purpose of their existence is this self-effacement in His service.

Rādhā invariably approaches Kṛṣṇa in the attitude of Mahābhāva, the perfect sentiment of love. The exuberance of their joy takes the form of the choral dance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa surrounded by the countless Gopikas dancing in pair with Kṛṣṇa-counterparts into which He multiplies Himself. This ecstatic dance of numerous pairs in circle is called Rāsālīlā. The Jīvas who adore Kṛṣṇa through pure

Bhakti are graced by His Svarūpa Śakti and lifted out of the domain of Māyā and made participants of the Bliss of Goloka where the eternal dance of Kṛṣṇa with Rādhikā and the Gopikas is going on.

Goloka, otherwise known also as Vṛndāvana and Mahāvaikuṇṭha, is the transcendental Abode of Kṛṣṇa formed of Śuddha-sattva for His residence by his Svarūpa Śakti. There Kṛṣṇa is eternally manifest in the form and dress of a Gopa or cowherd along with Rādhā, His counter-whole, and His Parīkāras or retinue of attendants consisting of Gopas and Gopikas. They all, in a sense, constitute the structure of Kṛṣṇa in so far as they are the formations of His Svarūpa Śakti, which is none other than Rādhā herself. As expressions of His Śakti, they minister to Him with absolute love and dedication without any touch of self-centred objectives. They set the standard for the Jīvas pursuing the path of devotion as to how Kṛṣṇa is to be served with loving dedication. Every Jīva, irrespective of his male or female embodiment, is a Śakti of Kṛṣṇa, being a part of his Taṭastha Śakti (Marginal Power) also known as Jīva Śakti. Only overpowered by Māyā, he is forgetful of this truth until by the practice of Bhakti he is liberated from the hold of Māyā and comes under the influence of Svarūpa Śakti, who, as Hlādinī, rouses in Him the sense of right relationship with Kṛṣṇa and draws him to the life of Bliss consisting in the selfless service of Kṛṣṇa in Goloka otherwise known as Vṛndāvana.

The Unalloyed Purity of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Conception

The teachers of this school are never tired of warning their students of their devotional literature against the possible misconception that the relationship of Kṛṣṇa with His Śakti has a sexual basis. Sex is something physical pertaining to the biological life of creatures on earth. It is included in physical nature which is a part of Māyā Śakti. Even the Jīva, which is included in Taṭastha Śakti, has no sex in itself, but it acquires it, when it identifies itself with

the physical body under the influence of Māyā Śakti. But Vṛndāvana and its denizens are all the expression of Svarūpa Śakti, and everything there, including the bodies of the Parikāras of Kṛṣṇa, are formed of Śuddha-sattva (unsullied stuff of Spiritual Consciousness), which has nothing to do with the combinations born of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, the constituents of material Prakṛti. Hence the description of Goloka is the very antipode of sex-life. Sex is based on physical body and is motivated by self-centred pleasure. Love is self-giving, but sex is absolutely self-regarding. At the human level there is a certain intermingling of these two — a sugar-coating of an absolutely brutal physical instinct with a pure spiritual value. The love that is evinced in the Parikāras of Kṛṣṇa is not to be understood in terms of this worldly love. Perhaps it may be correct to understand worldly love at its best as a distorted reflection of that value in its pristine purity as it manifests in the Parikāras of Kṛṣṇa. That love is without the slightest touch of self-centredness. The little self is forgotten in the joy of serving Kṛṣṇa, and pleasure and pain look alike when they are related to His service. The happiness of Kṛṣṇa becomes the sole reward and motivating force that His servitors know of. The joy of Goloka is the expression of the Hlādinī Śakti, Kṛṣṇa's power of Bliss, and a participant of it must necessarily have shifted his centre from the narrow little self to the Sat-Cid-Ānanda, the All-comprehensive Divine Person.

It is also to be noted that this school uses the terms male and female in a mystic sense. Kṛṣṇa is the only Male, and His threefold Śakti is considered Female in relation to Him. Thus all embodied beings, irrespective of whether they have male or female bodies, are expressions of the Śakti and are Female in the mystic sense attached to this term. It is also contended that contemplation on the blissful dance of Kṛṣṇa with His Śakti in Goloka, instead of making man sex-minded, will cure him for all time of this weakness, the universal ailment of all mankind.

Emanation of Kṛṣṇa

Goloka, the supreme Abode of Kṛṣṇa, is said to transcend all the worlds born of Prakṛti and the abodes of all divine manifestations. The fourteen material worlds are ensheathed by eight Āvaraṇas (covering layers), and the whole is encircled by the transcendental ocean called Kāraṇa Samudra or Viraja (literally meaning Causal Ocean or that which is beyond Rajas). Siddhaloka, the region of Nirguṇa Brahman, is beyond this ocean. Transcending it is Parmavyoman, the abode of the partial manifestation of Kṛṣṇa known also as Nārāyaṇa, Paramātmā etc. Māyā Śakti is directly under the control of Nārāyaṇa or Paramātmā, who is the manifestation of Kṛṣṇa's majesties (Aiśvarya nature) as contrasted with His blissfulness (Mādhurya). All the incarnations except Kṛṣṇa come from this Paramavyoman. Goloka, also known as Vṛndāvana, transcends this heavenly abode also. There, in that region of Light and Bliss, Kṛṣṇa, in the simple but most enchanting form of a Gopa, is served by His Parikāras, and is engaged in His eternal Rāsa Dance.

The eternal Goloka is non-phenomenal but Kṛṣṇa manifests Himself with all His Parikāras in the earthly Vṛndāvana. He and His associates are present in two ways. He is also present there in an unseen way. This is called His Aprakāṣa Prakāśa or unmanifest appearance. But He also descends on it in a manifest form, perceptible to the eyes. This is Prakāṣa Prakāśa, and is called Pūrṇāvatara, His complete and perfect Incarnation. In this sense it is that this school holds that Kṛṣṇa is the only full Incarnation, and all others are Aṁśas or partial manifestations of Nārāyaṇa.

IV

Bhakti as the Way of Higher Spiritual Fulfilment

Theology and metaphysics are not ends in themselves in this system as also in others. It is a means to help man

in attaining the spiritual summum bonum. The essential means for this is Bhakti, which may be translated as loving and adoring service of God. The word Bhakti comes from the root Bhaj which has several meanings, many of them being purely secular. In the devotional sense it means complete loving servitude or Seva, and so Bhakti has been described by Nārada Pañcarātra as whole-hearted loving service of the Supreme Being without any other consideration than the joy of the beloved Lord. It springs from the consciousness that the individual soul or Jīva, being part of God's Śakti as described in the earlier section, finds its meaning and fulfilment in dedication to, and service of, Him. Under the influence of Avidyā the Jīva identifies himself with matter and is engrossed in physical enjoyments, which the Māyā Śakti offers. But sufferings and a sense of futility in life turn the Jīva away from these material engrossment in course of time and prepare him for receiving the message of Bhakti. This message comes through contact with holy men, from whom one hears about the Lord's excellences. Passing through various preparatory disciplines, the Jīva realises that as the Prakṛti of the Lord, he is not a self-existent entity but an eternal dependant and servitor of His, and that he can find his self-fulfilment only in cultivating loving and self-less service of Him. This way of life as a monadic fraction of the Lord, wherein the interest of the Jīva is shifted from his individual self to the Spiritual Whole and finds fulfilment in entire submission and loving service of Him, is Bhakti.

Bhakti in this sense is an end in itself. It is to be distinguished from Mukti or liberation, which is generally put as the fourth and the highest value of life. Mukti is union with the Supreme. A Jīva, by following the path of Jñāna or knowledge can get merged in Brahman-consciousness and thereby gain Mukti. But Brahman is only the Tanu-bhā or the peripheral lustre of Kṛṣṇa as has already been pointed out, and to be merged in that is to be deprived of the supreme felicity of love and service of Kṛṣṇa, which

is looked upon as a distinct fifth *Puruṣārtha* (value of life) by this school following the teachings of the *Bhāgavata*. A follower of this school of Vedānta is therefore asked in the beginning itself to eschew *Mukti* and its *Sādhana* called the path of *Jñāna* (knowledge) which leads to the dissolution of individuality in the Divine, thus making it impossible for the *Jīva* to attain love and service of the Divine, which form the highest possibility open for him. For, the ideal condition in the eyes of the *Bhakta* is not to become sugar but to taste it.

So also the path of *Bhakti* has no element of *Karma* in it. *Karma* here means Vedic ritualistic actions either of an obligatory nature or of an optional nature, for attainment of heavenly enjoyments. Promises of such rewards held forth in the *Veda* are only *Parokṣa Vāda* — a bait held out to unregenerate minds so as to bring them into the path of God ultimately and are not to be understood literally. Vedic rituals are therefore to be eschewed, and in their place, specific devotional rituals forming part of the *Bhakti* discipline, are to be adopted. But discharge of one's duties in selflessness and detachment and as an offering to God, has a place in the devotee's life, as it leads to purification of his mind through the elimination of the *Āsuric* (demoniac) tendencies born of self-centredness. Thereby it increases the competence of the aspirant to follow the specific *Bhakti* disciplines. But then such *Karma* is a part and parcel of *Bhakti* discipline and should be distinguished from the pursuit of Vedic *Karma*.

The path of *Yoga* or concentration may be considered an independent path leading the *Jīva* to the *Paramātmān*, the intermediate aspect of the Divine as the seat of all power and glory. Just like the path of *Jñāna*, this also is a diversion from the goal of the highest felicity that is *Bhakti*. But the methods of concentration adopted by the *Yogins* can be usefully employed in the path of *Bhakti* also as an aid to hold the mind in concentration on the Lord.

Bhakti is thus independent of all other Yogas. It is both the end and the means, and the term Bhakti is often used indiscriminately to indicate both these aspects. As an end, it is the highest goal of the Jīva, and consists in the experience of pure delight (Prīti) in the service of Kṛṣṇa without any thought of any extraneous objective like Mokṣa or attainment of any object of desire obtainable by human effort. Thus as an end, it is an attitude and an experience, while as a means it is a set of specific disciplines. Sādhya Bhakti and Sādhanā Bhakti are the two technical terms used to indicate this difference.

Vaidhī or Sādhanā Bhakti

Sādhanā Bhakti or disciplinary devotion is divided into two stages - Vaidhī Bhakti and Rāgānugā Bhakti. Vaidhī Bhakti means practice of the set of rules and disciplines laid down in Bhakti texts with a view to stimulate the feeling of love for God with the help of external aids, while the Rāgānugā is the highest stage of these disciplines in which external aids are minimised and this stimulation is accomplished more by psychological means. A man may be said to be fit for practising Vaidhī Bhakti when deep faith (Śraddhā) in a spiritual reality has dawned on him. Till then also a man may be following what is called Sādhanā Bhakti or devotional observances in a conventional way, but that is more a matter of routine and social conformity. Śraddhā is generated in the mind of man by association with holy men whose conduct and conversations alone can impress a person with the existential nature of the spiritual reality. Hence association with holy men is the most important factor in the generation of devotion. A person with Śraddhā launches on the practice of devotional disciplines, which have been elaborated into sixty-three as follows: 1) submission to the Guru; 2) receiving; initiation and lessons from him in the devotion to Kṛṣṇa; 3) serving the teacher; 4) following the conduct of saints; 5) inquiry into what is true religion; 6) abstinence; 7) living in sacred

places of the Vaiṣṇavas; 8) earning only for maintenance and not hoarding; 9) observing fast on Ekādaśī etc; 10) respecting Sālagrāma and other emblems of Viṣṇu; 11) keeping away from atheists and impious men; 12) avoiding making too many disciples and getting entangled in their affairs; 13) avoiding too many ambitious projects; 14) avoiding writing too many books, practising too many crafts, delivering too many lectures, and involvement in too many disputations; 15) giving up faulty behaviour; 16) not being overwhelmed by adverse fortune; 17) avoiding disrespect to the Deity as worshipped by others; 18) not harassing others; 19)&20) avoiding Sevāparādha (disrespectful behaviour in worship) and Nāmāparādha (disrespect to Divine Name); 21) intolerance of criticism of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees; 22) putting on the Vaiṣṇava marks; 23) stamping the letter 'Hari' on the arms; 24) accepting with devotion flowers, Tulasi etc., offered to the Lord; 25) dancing before the Deity; 26)&27) prostrating before the Deity and the Guru; 28) following the Deity in religious processions; 29) circumambulating the Deity in the temples; 30) going to the temple regularly; 31) worshipping the Deity regularly; 32) serving the Deity in all possible ways; 33) singing the praise of Kṛṣṇa; 34) performing Sankīrtana (collective singing); 35) silently repeating the Divine Name (Japa); 36) revealing one's innermost feelings to the Deity; 37) repeating devotional verses; 38) eating with relish what is offered to the Deity (Prasāda); 39) drinking the water with which the Deity is washed; 40) smelling the fragrance of flowers, incense etc., offered to the Deity; 41) touching the Deity; 42) Gazing at the Deity; 43) witnessing the evening and other services at the temple; 44) listening to the recitation of the names of the Lord (Sahasranāma etc); 45) seeking the Lord's grace; 46) remembering the Lord always; 47) meditating on the Lord; 48) adopting the attitude of servant towards the Lord; 49) adopting a friend's attitude towards the Lord; 50) dedicating oneself to the Lord; 51) offering to Him all that is dear to oneself; 52)

using all one's energies towards performing His work; 53) absolute self-surrender; 54) tending Tulasi plants etc., associated with Him; 55) following the scriptures; 56) residing in Mathura and other holy places; 57) serving the devotees (Vaiṣṇavas); 58) holding devotional festivals according to one's capacity; 59) observing monthly vows especially in Kārtika; 60) observing Janmāṣṭami with special reverence; 61) loving the feet of the Deity; 62) studying the Bhāgavata Purāṇa with fellow devotees; and 63) maintaining contact with Bhaktas more evolved than oneself.

This long list is more or less the elaboration of the nine limbs of devotional discipline described in the Bhāgavata as consisting in Śravaṇa (hearing the excellences of the Lord), Kīrtana (singing His praise), Smaraṇa (remembering Him by repeating His Name), Pādasevanam (service of the world as God's manifestation), Arcana (worship of Him in holy images), Vandana (obeisance to Him), Dāśya (feeling of being His servant), Sakhya (having intimacy of friendship), and Atmanivedana (dedicating oneself wholly to Him). But there are three items that are new. First of all there is the step of accepting a Guru. This is necessary, because though God is the only Guru ultimately, we get His guidance chiefly through human agencies. Either a holy man or the Head of an Order representing a spiritual tradition is approached by a disciple for spiritual initiation. Holy formulae of Divine name combined with Bījas, transmitted from generations of Gurus to disciples, are communicated to the initiates. These Mantras are potent with spiritual power, and through devoted and concentrated repetition of these and meditation on their meaning, the spiritual power of the disciples is developed. The teacher who initiates is called Dīkṣā-Guru and he can be only one. In addition, one can have a Sikṣā-Guru who teaches ways of worship, chanting and other spiritual practices. Mention is made also of a third type of Guru known as Caitanya-Guru whose function is to

impart the esoteric meaning of the sacred Mantras and various practices and procedures involved in worship.. A competent Guru can, however, fulfil all these functions. Service of the Guru occupies a very important place in the discipline. It is as important as the service of God Himself, since it is only by the grace of the Guru that spiritual efforts will fructify.

In the list given, mention is made of what may be described as devotional offences, *Sevāparādha* and *Nāmāparādha*. *Sevāparādha* (offence relating to worship) consists in failure to observe the rules of purity, procedure and reverential homage in one's association with temples of God and worship of holy images. Some of these include moving about irreverently before holy images, indulging in impure or prohibited practices in temples, not contributing according to one's capacity for worship, eating without offering to the Lord, offering from what has been eaten already etc. *Nāmāparādha* is disrespect shown to the Divine Name which is as weighty and holy as God Himself. Ten such offences are enumerated; slandering saintly persons; regarding the Name and attributes of Śiva as independent of those of Viṣṇu; ignoring spiritual preceptors; finding fault with scriptures; taking the praises of Divine Name found in scriptures as exaggerations (*Arthavāda*); deliberately sin, or resolve to sin, with the idea that one can absolve oneself from them later by chanting the Divine Name; holding an attitude of indifference to Divine Name; considering oneself superior to the Divine Name; and imparting the Divine Name to people who have no faith in it.

Rāgānugā Bhakti

By the long and sincere practice of Vaidhī Bhakti, in which the attempt is to stimulate the sense of loving adoration of God with the help of external aids, the devotional sentiment becomes more and more natural, and a devotee is then considered fit to practise the next stage

called Rāgānugā Bhakti. The expression means the attempt to imitate and thereby generate in oneself, the Rāga or loving attachment that manifested in the various Vṛndāvana associates of Kṛṣṇa in their relation with Him. Here also there is an external aid but it is of the nature of imaginative concentration through impersonation. In the life of Śrī Kṛṣṇa at Vṛndāvana and Mathura he is found to entertain different forms of loving relationship towards different devotees who were the earthly manifestations of His eternal Parikāras (attendants). The Bhāgavata declares that Kṛṣṇa is the Beloved, the Soul, the Son, the Friend, the respected Ancestor, the Relative and the desirable Deity. He appeared as the beloved (Priya) to the Gopis and His queens; as the soul (Ātmā) to ascetics like Sanaka; as the son (Suta) to Nanda and Yaśodā; as the friend (Sakhā) to Gopas like Sūdāmā; as respected ancestor (Guru) to Pradyumna and others; as loving well-wisher (Suhṛt) to Arjuna and like-minded friends; and as the Chosen Deity (Iṣṭa Deva) to Uddhava and other devotees like Him. Now the devotee who practises Rāgānugā Bhakti is to live in imaginative identification with any of these associates of Kṛṣṇa representing the attitude he is practising, and thereby produce in himself vicariously that Bhāva or devotional attitude manifested in the relationship of that Vṛndāvana associate of Kṛṣṇa. The Bhāvas or devotional sentiments that could be cultivated are five: Śānta (peaceful), Dāsyā (servitor's), Sakhya (friend's), Vātsalya (parental), and Mādhurya (conjugal). The Śānta Bhāva is generally discarded by the followers of this system, as it is suited only for those who consider Jñāna and Mukti (knowledge of oneness and liberation) as the goal. They are the votaries of Brahman or Paramātmā aspects of the Supreme Reality, Kṛṣṇa. The object of such devotional practice is freedom from Samsāra through mergence in His being. But Kṛṣṇa in His essence as Mādhurya (Sweetness, Bliss) can be attained only through Bhakti of the highest order known as Prema or Prīti, which is realised in service of Him and not in mergence. The

essence of this form of Bhakti is the acceptance of the sentiment that Kṛṣṇa is one's own (Mamatā-bhāva) and the consequent forgetfulness of His majesty in an overwhelming sense of His dearness. The intimate personal relationships like those of a servant, friend, parent and sweet-heart provide channels for the expression of this kind of loving devotion (Prema Bhakti) to Kṛṣṇa when the devotee has come to recognise Him as his 'Own', the nearest and the dearest. The life of Kṛṣṇa as described in the Bhāgavata is unique for the depiction of these forms of love through the experiences of His Parikāras (associates and attendants) mentioned earlier. One practising Rāgānugā-bhakti is to gain imaginative identification with one or the other of these Parikāras and participate vicariously in their loving relationship and service of Kṛṣṇa. Devotees of this type, in order to get full identification, are asked to spend as much of their time as possible at Mathura and Vṛndāvana, where Kṛṣṇa's earthly manifestation took place. Even the dress and ways of life associated with the Parikāra impersonated and the Bhāva contemplated on, are enjoined to be adopted by the practising devotee.

The adoption of Rāgānugā- Bhakti does not require the abandonment of the discipline of Vaidhī Bhakti like hearing the scriptures, chanting the Divine Name, serving teacher etc. mentioned earlier, but there is a decided shift to inner factors like contemplation for stimulating the sentiment of loving relationship.

Prema Bhakti

When the sense of intimate relationship with Kṛṣṇa has become natural and continuously sustained even without any external aid, it is said to have become Rāgātmikā (of the very nature of attachment) in contrast to Rāgānugā (of the nature of imitation). Devotion is then said to have transcended the Sādhana (disciplinary) stage and attained to the Sādhya (accomplished) stage. It is also given the descriptive name of Prema Bhakti (loving devotion) or Prīti

(the sense of dearness and delight in respect of God). Prema or Prīti becomes possible only when one has learnt to feel that God is one's 'own' (Mamatā-bhāva). Forgetting His power and majesty as creator, preserver and destroyer, one has to be established in any relationship of love with Him mentioned before and be habituated to look on oneself as Kṛṣṇa's servant, friend, parent or sweet-heart. Only in such intimate relationships can one feel Him as one's own. Each of the above mentioned forms of love is included in the succeeding one, and the last of them, namely, the relationship of the sweet-heart, therefore includes all others in it and marks the acme of divine love (Prema). The classic example of such love is the love of the Gopikas for Kṛṣṇa described in the Bhāgavata, and it is the aspiration of every devotee of this school to be blessed with at least a little of this form of intense God-love in their heart.

Prema-bhakti, on its first manifestation, that is, before it has deepened, is called Bhāva. Bhāva is called the morning sun of Prema, announcing the emergence of a new factor into the life of the devotee. Though the Sādhana Bhakti might have prepared the mind, Prema cannot be called a mere product of the preparatory disciplines. It is an expression of Kṛṣṇa's grace and is called a special manifestation of Śuddha-sattva. An expression of Kṛṣṇa's Svarūpa-Śakti, Hlādinī or His inherent Potency of Bliss, is cast on the devotee, and it is the reflection of Hlādinī from the devotee's heart in the form of love and service that is called Prema, to which Bhāva stands as the dawn stands to day. The efflorescence of this form of love has certain characteristics. Internally the devotee begins to feel an intense engrossment with the Lord (Rati) from which his mind refuses to move. As a result he develops a liquidity and smoothness of the heart. He is established in a state of placidity of mind (Kṣānti), in which he could remain unperturbed by all circumstances that ordinarily cause cares, anxieties and disturbances. He spends all his time in

devotional mood and practices like chanting the Divine Name, hearing the exposition of His glories and excellences etc. He evinces no interest in or attraction for objects of the senses. His conviction in the possibility of realising the Divine becomes unshakably established due to the fore-taste of it got in Bhāva.

Bhāva deepened is called Prema or supreme love of God based on an apprehension of Him as the dearest. It is also called Prīti or the joy of unselfish love and service. The joyous experience of this type is to be distinguished from Sukha or happiness and satisfaction. Happiness can be a purely self-centred satisfaction derived from a self-centred pursuit. But in the joy that is called Prīti, there is no pursuit of pleasure for one's own sake; there is only the thought of service and happiness of the beloved Lord in complete forgetfulness of oneself and one's own welfare.

Such self-forgetting dedication, uncorrupted by the narrow self, eliminates from the aspirant all thoughts of attaining Mukti, or release from the cycle of birth and death, even if this might follow as a consequence of the dawn of pure devotion. A true Bhakta (devotee) does not care for it even if this fulfilment called the fourth Puruṣārtha is offered. He seeks only liberation into the joy of serving God who is Joy. One who has attained this state of mind is said to have attained the fifth Puruṣārtha the state of selflessness.

Prīti does not involve any personal effort, but flows easily through God's grace. It manifests when devotional attachment takes a purely personal form as a servant's to the Master, a friend's to a friend, a parent's to the child, or a woman's to a lover, and results in intense attraction to the Lord.' But it is pointed out that Prīti involves no sensual attraction, though the language and the symbolism used to describe the attraction, deprivation and satisfaction involved in it may take an erotic form. For selflessness, as already pointed out, is the characteristic of spiritual love,

whereas self-consideration is the very basis of sensuous attachments.

It is through *Prīti* alone that the most unique aspects or nature of the Lord is revealed. He is characterised by the basic quality of 'belovedness' which is revealed only to the eye of love. Philosophic apprehension can grasp Him only as impersonal and changeless substratum or as omnipotent creative power. Aspirants who do not follow the devotional discipline of love and service but seek for unity (knowledge) and liberation (*Mukti*), attain to these lower aspects of the Supreme Being known as Brahman and *Paramātmān*. The intellectual intuition of the Impersonal Brahman, of which Śāṅkara's Advaita speaks, is according to this school, only absorption in the *Sat* (existence) aspect of Kṛṣṇa. The impersonality and relationlessness of this intellectual intuition (*Jñāna*) in which Śāṅkarites see the special excellences and superiority of their system, are viewed in the reverse manner by this school as the precursor of the concreteness of the transcendent experience of Kṛṣṇa as the object of love. What is presented in Brahman-intuition is only the generic aspect of the concrete spiritual reality. *Savikalpaka*, distinguished by clearness and definiteness, is the characteristic of the core of Reality, while the *Nirvikalpaka*, the boundless and the relationless, is only its peripheral aspect. Only *Bhakti*, love-consciousness, opens the path to this transcendent experience of God as Bliss (*Ānanda*). But even in *Bhakti*, if the outlook of the devotee is dominated by the consciousness of the power and glory of the Divine, the devotee can attain only to *Paramātmān*, otherwise known as *Nārāyaṇa*, *Ādiviṣṇu* etc. but not to the *Bhagavan* (Kṛṣṇa), of whom *Paramātmān* and Brahman are only aspects. It is only to the devotee who abandons even *Mukti* and loves Kṛṣṇa for the sheer joy of serving Him that He reveals His most supreme attribute of 'belovedness' (*priyatva-lakṣaṇa dharma-viśeṣa*), which is the essence of His power of Bliss (*Hlādinī*). *Prīti* is thus the experience of loving God and being loved by Him. The Lord is

immersed in two distinguishable variations of Bliss. He is of the substance of Ānanda Bliss. But Ānanda to be significant, should be conceived also as enjoyable. Sugar is by nature sweet but sweetness is revealed only when it is tasted. So the blissful Bhagavān becomes the enjoyer of Bliss (Rasika) through His potency of Bliss which is technically called Hlādinī (identified with Rādhā) which manifests as His form, associates, the Gopas and Gopikas, residence etc. Of all these manifestations of Hlādinī, devotion of the nature of Prema is perhaps the most unique. Hlādinī flowing out into the Jīva, transfigures him into a poem of love and service directed towards the Lord, creating in the latter the thrill of responsive love (Śaktyānanda) that reveals His own essential nature of belovedness to Himself through the Jīva. Thus the Lord becomes dear to devotee and the devotee becomes dear to the Lord, generating the unique thrill of Bliss in both. It is therefore said in the Bhakti texts that the Lord is overpowered by the love of the devotees and has subordinated Himself to them. "Being a lover of my devotees", He says in the Bhāgavata, "I am subordinate to them. My heart being in the hold of my devotees, I am as it were, one without freedom." In the Gītā also He declares: "The Jñānī (meaning the devotee of the highest type), who is ever in communion with Me and has exclusive love of Me, excels over all. I am the dearest to the Jñānī, and he is dear to Me. While all types of devotees are noble, the Jñānī is considered by Me as My very self" (Gita VII, 17&18).

Stages of development of Prīti

The progress of Bhakti as Prīti (i.e. as distinguished from disciplinary devotion) is divided into seven stages. (1) Rati or Bhāva is marked by natural attachment and absorption in the Lord without the need of any external stimuli (2) Prema is the indissoluble attachment binding the devotee to God by the sense of 'myness' (3) Sneha is the end product of Prema when the heart melts in love. (4)

Māna is marked by sensitiveness due to excessive love. (5) Rāga is eager longing for the object of love touched with the enjoyable pain associated with it. (6) Anurāga is the experience of unceasing novelty in the object of love. (7) Mahā-bhāva is the most ecstatic expression of love, and is called Divyonmāda (Divine madness). The savants of Caitanya School enumerate about twenty characteristics, physical and psychological, as expressions of this unique Divine sentiment in both its phases as love in union and love in separation. Some of these unique characteristics are: intense longing, inability to bear separation, readiness to bear even intense pain in the interest of the beloved, loss of the sense of time, power to influence one's environment with the intensity of one's feeling, loss of sense of self even in normal consciousness, loss of all fear of death and welcoming it as the means for elemental union with Kṛṣṇa, supra-normal behaviour that looks like 'Divine madness' and so on.

Mahā-bhāva is said to have manifested only in the Gopikas and in some Divine Incarnations like Śrī Caitanya and Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa. The God-love of devotees will ordinarily rise to the state of Rati or Bhāva only, but not Mahā-bhāva. According to the identification they establish with the Parikāras of Kṛṣṇa, only partial manifestations of Divyonmāda (frenzy of divine love) may appear in them. But once Rati is established in the mind of a devotee, God's grace generates in Him Prema (self-abnegating love expressing itself in service), and it reveals to him God as the Beloved, the centre of all love and attraction. In the words of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, he becomes a Bhāgavatottama who "sees the glory of God in all beings and all beings as resting in God."

Appendix I

Rāmakṛṣṇa and Relativity

SVĀMĪ ĀTMAPRIYĀNANDA*

When a young German-born lad working as an examiner in a Swiss Patent Office wrote a small paper in 1905 on the 'Electrodynamics of moving bodies', it was doubtful if he knew he was ushering in a revolution in contemporary Physics. And when he discovered that there is no preferential frame of space in Nature's scheme of things, he certainly didn't know that he was introducing perhaps that most popular word in the dictionary of twentieth-century Physics — *Relativity*. Like all revolutions in the thought-world, this attempt by a Patent office clerk, unknown and obscure at that time, was unattended by any blast of trumpets. It was born in solitude and silence.

Similarly, when an unknown priest of Kāli temple in an obscure corner of Bengal discovered, nearly three decades earlier, that there is no *preferential* frame to which Reality could be referred, and that each frame of reference is as good as any other, he too perhaps didn't know he was ushering in a revolution in twentieth-century philosophy and religion. This discovery too took place in solitude and silence.

Silence, paradoxically, is more powerful and penetrating than sound—more eloquent than speech. And 'like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses', powerful thought-currents bring about silent revolutions in the thought-world. Such is the creative power of silence.

One of the reasons why profound discoveries can take place in silence is that it is precisely then that the mind

*This essay provides a scientific elucidation of the subject matter of the Introduction of this book.

is at peace. And when the mind is quiet, it is then most objective. The mind then does not throw up its own prejudices, pet concepts and images, and 'contaminate' Truth. When the mind's egoistic projections, its plays of pride, are stilled, Truth stands revealed; it 'flashes' as we might say. And this flash is what we often call 'discovery'. Einstein showed that it is because man is so caught up in the cocoon of his own world of ideas and prejudices and concepts that he takes that cocoon to be the only *right* frame to which to refer the rest of the world. Unfortunately there are other men populating this planet of ours who have *their own* cocoons. And each of them imagines that his own cocoon is the *right* frame relative to which the rest of the world has to be observed and measured.

When I say that *my* frame is the right frame, I assume that every phenomenon happening around me has to be referred to *mine*, if one wishes to learn the *real* truth about those phenomena; which means that I tacitly assert that mine is the absolute frame and therefore provides the right reference frame—the real one, mind you. In other words, I imply that God (or any Impersonal substitute, if your cocoon-concepts rebel against the use of such a word) had me especially in mind when he projected this universe.

Einstein's main objection to such an assertion was that God doesn't say that, but you! If the Almighty Creator had *you* in mind and desired that *you* be the absolute frame to which the rest of His creation be referred, He should have given some indications of it in His impartial scheme. In point of fact, in His (mischievous?) play of mercy, He has endowed everyone of His creatures enough egocentricity to claim the same thing. The only way out, Einstein argued, was to give up our egocentric clinging to *our* frame as the right one, and recognize that all the frames are right. The real rightness consists, therefore, in recognizing that everybody else's frame is as much right as mine. Once this is recognized, all the unsolved riddles regarding the

interpretation of the historic Michelson-Morley experiment, which tried to measure relative motion through ether, stand resolved. Einstein's genius in recognizing this simple fact consists, perhaps, not so much in his scientific or mathematical genius, but in his lack of egoism. It is the egocentric attitude, this bloated little self, that drives us to assert that *mine* is *the* thing. Yours is right only so far as it agrees with *mine*. The puffed-up ego fails to see the simple, obvious fact that the other man too may just as well make the same assertion, which to him will be as true as mine is to me.

A little more than a quarter-century before Einstein made this simple observation, a somewhat similar principle was enunciated by an unknown, illiterate saint in an obscure corner of India. Everyone knows his name: Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Experimenting with himself in his inner laboratory, unknown and unhonoured, ridiculed and scoffed at, this 'mad' mystic was discovering certain remarkable truths in the religio-psychological sphere. Perhaps 'was discovering' is not the appropriate expression. They were being revealed to him. As he used to assert times without number, 'Mother' showed him these truths. And 'Mother' also showed him that the world would soon accept his liberal doctrine—that all the frames of reference are equally true—and that it is specially for the rediscovery and repromulgation of such a doctrine that he had incarnated himself on this earth. Śrī Rāmākṛṣṇa, innocent of all modern education, couldn't quite understand that there was anything wonderful or unique in what he had discovered through years of intense contemplation, prayer, Sādhana, through 'blood, toil, tears and sweat', even as, perhaps, the young Einstein didn't quite know that he was going to revolutionize the entire thought-current and the world-view of Physics in future, when he wrote in 1905 a small paper stating his Principle of Relativity. Later, when Śrī Rāmākṛṣṇa went on a pilgrimage to different holy places and met different types of persons, it dawned on him that he was one of

the pioneers in discovering this wonderful, liberal doctrine, and that it was for the one purpose of promulgating it and setting in motion the wheel of Dharma based on it (*dharma-cakra-pravartana*) that the 'Mother' preserved his body for the good of the world.¹

The first great proclamation of this doctrine was made by Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa through the medium of his chief apostle, Svāmī Vivekānanda, at the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, exactly 12 years before Einstein was to make a similar declaration in Physics. Who can really tell if the young Einstein wasn't unconsciously influenced by the gigantic invisible thought-current generated by Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa's Sādhana, which poured forth in a deluge to destroy all exclusiveness and illiberalism? When Svāmī Vivekānanda 'burst forth like a bombshell' to declare: 'Help and not Fight, Assimilation and not Destruction, Harmony and Peace and not Dissension',² he was but broadcasting the same liberal doctrine of his Master. Thought-force is highly penetrating. As Svāmī Vivekānanda said:

The highest men are calm, silent, and unknown. They are the men who really know the power of thought; they are sure that even if they go into a cave and close the door and simply think five true thoughts and then pass away, these five thoughts of theirs will live through eternity. Indeed, such thought will penetrate through the mountains, cross the oceans, and travel through the world. They will enter deep into human hearts and brains and raise up men and women who will give them practical expression in the workings of human life³.

And the thought-current of liberalism generated by Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa and Svāmī Vivekānanda—which, 'fastening on' to the brain of an Einstein, has revolutionized the whole of science at the very dawn of the twentieth century—will continue to influence the thought-structure of the entire humanity till the

1. Svāmī Sāradānanda, *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa the Great Master* (Madras: Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Math, 1970), p.603
2. *Complete Works of Svāmī Vivekānanda* (Calcutta: Advaita Āśrama, 1977) 1:24
3. *Ibid.* 1:106

world-view is reshaped and cast into a firm mould of harmony and love.

A question now naturally comes up. 'Your frame is as true as mine', may be a fine gesture of benevolence, but doesn't it reveal a vacuum-insight in this context? How can all points of view be *equally* true? Suppose they contradict each other, as they often do, how can two contradictory things be equally true at the same time? It is like saying that if somebody views milk as black, then both the points of view, viz., that milk is white as well as that it is black, are equally true. Isn't this obviously opposed to ordinary commonsense, leaving Physics, relativity-principle and all that alone? Readers of the Ramakrishna Kathamrita (translated into English under the title *The Gospel of Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa*) will recall that this was one of the earliest dilemmas that presented themselves to the author, Śrī Mahendranāth Gupta, who chose to style himself as 'M' ⁴ Let us examine this question a little more closely, taking the help of a familiar phenomenon in relativistic physics.

It is now common knowledge how the whole game of relativity started off with the historic experiment of Michelson and Morley who set out to measure the relative velocity of the earth through ether. They found that its speed of motion relative to this sea of ether was zero. Since then the experiment was repeated several times, with great accuracy, in several sophisticated ways, but every time the answer has been the same—null result. Thus the upshot of all the toil undergone by man's intelligence over the decades was that there appears to be some perfect conspiracy of Nature to conceal the earth's motion through ether. Such a point of view, however, is once again the fancy of the unenlightened politically-minded person who suspects conspiracies in the innocuous dealings of Nature. Einstein brought enlightenment by asking man to have faith in Nature before suspecting her, and pointed out that the

4. *The Condensed Gospel of Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa* (Madras: Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Math, 1984) p.34

so called conspiracy is nothing but the operation of certain natural laws. Nature has a favourite way of resorting to null results when man asks stupid questions. When man in his arrogance repeatedly pesters her to tell him about something which doesn't exist, and goes about solving complicated mathematical equations for determining this quantity, then this is what Nature does. In the present case, for example, one wishes to find the relative velocity V of the earth through ether. One forms the various electromagnetic equations in which V is scattered liberally. One then inserts all the known values and painfully tries to eliminate all the unknowns except V . 'The solution goes on famously; but just as we have got rid of the other unknowns—behold!— V disappears as well, and we are left with the indisputable but irritating conclusion:

$$0 = 0$$

This is a favourite device that mathematical equations resort to when we propound stupid questions. If we tried to find the latitude and longitude of a point north-east of the North Pole, we should probably receive the same mathematical answer, "Velocity through ether" is as meaningless as "north-east of the north-pole".⁵

To give a more popular illustration: Suppose a child under the spell of a delirious fever sees that his nose has become as long as an elephant's trunk. He insists on knowing its length. The answer that his kind mother would give would be similar to what our kind mother Nature does when her blabber-mouth babies keep asking nonsensical questions. Philosophically, the delirious baby demanding to know why his nose became so long is similar to grown-up babies—'moustached babies', in the words of Svāmī Vivekānanda—insisting on knowing how the Absolute Reality, perfect God, could project this relative universe, imperfect and full of misery. To ask for a causal

5. A.S. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* (Comet Books, Collins, 1928), p. 37.
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connection between the Absolute and the relative is meaningless and Nature's answer is the null result! And to interpret this null result as the inability to explain the relative universe and thus deny the existence of the Absolute Reality, of God, is—well, of it the less said the better!

Einstein, then, propounded the simple law of Nature that reveals her beautiful economy; 'Nature is such that it is impossible to determine absolute motion by any experiment whatever.'⁶ This was the first formulation of the principle of relativity.

For a long time, the interpretation of the null result of the Michelson-Morley experiment posed a serious problem to the physicists. Interpreting something is perhaps easy; but interpreting a zero leads to all kinds of complications. Several interpretations arose, for 'nothing' can be interpreted in any way one pleases! One is reminded of the interpretations given to Buddha's silence about subtle philosophical questions which led to any number of philosophical schools in later Buddhism. The interpretation by Lorentz and Fitzgerald, which is now well established by theory and experiment, was something very interesting. Without going into details, one may state the Lorentz-Fitzgerald result as follows: A moving rod contracts in the direction of motion. This contraction, known as Lorentz-Fitzgerald contraction, is exceedingly small in all ordinary circumstances. It does not at all depend on the material of the rod but only on the speed. For example, if the speed is 19 miles a second—the speed of the earth round the sun—the contraction of length is 1 in 200 million, or 2.5 inches in the diameter of the earth.'⁷

One may say: 'Preposterous! You don't mean to say that a moving rod behaves as badly as to keep altering its dimensions merely when it is pointed in different directions!

6. Sir James Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe* (London: Pelican Books, 1937) p.111

7. *Nature of the Physical World*, pp.17,39

One then can't trust anything. Well, what is the actual length of the rod?

Ah, there you're once again trying to ask about absolute quantities when you're in a relative frame. To explain: Suppose one asks, 'Is it really true that a moving rod gets contracted in the direction of its motion?' The interested reader is referred to a brilliant discussion on this question in Eddington's book.⁸ The main thrust of Eddington's analysis is given below.

Perhaps one ought to make a distinction between what is true and what is *really* true. 'A statement which does not profess to deal with anything except appearances may be true; a statement which is not only true but deals with the realities beneath the appearances is *really* true. Suppose, one looks at the balance-sheet of a public company, and asks: Is it true? Yes, of course, don't you see that it has been certified by a chartered accountant? But is it *really* true? Well, several questions then arise. And one knows the whole game. But what is the purpose of a balance-sheet? To balance! And everything else is subordinated to this end.

'The physicist who uses a frame of space has to account for every millimetre of space—in fact to draw up a balance-sheet and *make it balance*.' When a 6-foot man travelling at 1,61,000 miles a second happens to be one of the items of transaction involved, an entry of 6 feet in the balance-sheet, however true it might be, would not make the balance-sheet balance. The 'balance-sheet length' of the 6 footer would have to be 'written down' as 3 feet, for the purpose of balancing.

This 'writing down' of lengths for balance-sheet purposes is the Fitzgerald contraction. The entry 3 feet in the balance-sheet does not indicate any peculiarity about the man; it only means that the frame of reference chosen is such that in *that* frame the man appears to be a 3-footer. To quote Eddington:

8. *Ibid* C-0. In Public Domain. Digitized by Muthulakshmi Research Academy

An object has different lengths in the different space-frames, and any 6-foot man will have a length 3 feet in some frame or other. The statement that the length of the rapid traveller is 3 feet does not indicate any peculiarity about the man; it only indicates that our adopted frame is the one in which his length is 3 feet. If it hadn't been ours, it would have seen someone else's. ...We have been confronted with something not contemplated in classical physics—a multiplicity of frames of space, each one as good as any other. And in place of a distance, magnetic force, acceleration, etc., which according to classical ideas must necessarily be definite and unique, we are confronted with different distances, etc., corresponding to the different frames, with no ground for making a choice between them. Our simple solution has been to give up the idea that one is right and others are spurious imitations, and to accept them *en bloc*;in the main this leaves the structure of our physical knowledge unaltered; only we must give up certain expectations as to the behaviour of these quantities, and certain tacit assumptions which were based on the belief that they are absolute.The relativity of the current scheme of physics invites us to search deeper and find the absolute scheme underlying it, so that we may see the world in a truer perspective.⁹

We are now in a position to understand how all the different points of view can be right at the same time. The height of a traveller being 3 feet is as true as its being 4 feet and this is as true as its being 5 or 6. This looks ridiculous to us because of our deeply ingrained prejudice—that one of them alone is right and that they are mutually exclusive. *It is this exclusive tendency that is at the root of all disharmony.* A unitive vision that tries to synthesize, to harmonize, to amalgamate, a vision that is anxious to find a common ground, is always inclusive. When Holy Mother Śrī Śārada Devī said in her own spontaneously innocent, motherly way: 'Amjad is as much my son as Sarat is' or that 'No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own', she was demonstrating nothing but this all-inclusive vision. Or when Svāmī Vivekānanda burst forth in an eloquent appeal at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, he was emphasizing the same vision:

Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence,

9. *Ibid.*, pp.40-41

drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.¹⁰

The same idea was so expressively illustrated by Swamiji in a little story which he told the Parliament on 15 September 1893—the story of the frog in the well. He concluded by saying:

'I am a Hindu. I am sitting in my own little well and thinking that the whole world is my little well. The Christian sits in his little well and thinks the whole world is his well. The Mohammedan sits in his little well and thinks that is the whole world. I have to thank you of America for the great attempt you are making to break down the barriers of this little world of ours, and hope that, in the future, the Lord will help you to accomplish your purpose.'¹¹

In the language of relativity, the Hindu, sitting in *his* frame of reference, thinks that the vision of the Reality from his frame is the right one. And the Christian imagines that the view of the Reality as seen from *his* frame of reference is the right one. And so with the Mohammedan and the Buddhist and all others. Einstein's principle asserts that Reality or Nature itself has no way of distinguishing between the different frames. Nature doesn't envisage any 'preferential' frame. 'Rightness' as applied to a frame of reference cannot be found, because it doesn't exist; it's a myth. It is like the elongated nose of the delirious child.

You are standing with a label in your hand before a row of packages all precisely similar. You are worried because there is nothing to help you to decide which of the packages it should be attached to. Look at the label and see what is written on it. Nothing.

'Right' as applied to frames of space is a blank label. It implies that there is something distinguishing a right frame from a wrong frame; but when we ask what is this distinguishing property, the only answer

10. *Complete Works*, 1:4

11. *Ibid.*, 1:5
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we receive is 'Rightness', which does not make the meaning clearer or convince us that there is a meaning.¹²

In a similar fashion, the Hindu and the Christian and the Mohammedan, and within the Hindu fold, the Advaita-vadin, the Śākta, the Vaiṣṇava and a host of people of this sort, are anxious to affix the label in their hands on that one frame which according to them is the 'right' one. They little realize that they are standing in front of frames which are all on equal footing, with no known criterion to decide on which of the frames their label is to be attached. And after all, they haven't looked at what they have in hand. A blank label! What an amount of bloodshed and hatred and animosity and quarrels and crusades over such an exercise!

All frames of reference—all points of view—being on equal footing means, therefore, that none of them represents the absolute truth. All of them are but partial views of the Reality, *relative* views of the Absolute, *with respect to* and, therefore, *as conditioned by* the particular frame of reference.

Compare Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa's enunciation of this principle in his own inimitable and transparent fashion: Some one reported having seen a red animal on a tree, while another asserted he saw the same animal green. Someone else denied it was either; it was yellow. A row followed. An old man sitting under the tree laughed and said: 'My boys, all of you are right. Only you are not right when you say that others are not right. I live under this tree, and know the animal very well. It is called a chameleon. It is red and green and yellow and much more besides.'

Or take the parable of the blind men perceiving the elephant from different points of view, and the futile quarrel that ensued.

Or the parable of the dyer: Once a dyer was seen dyeing clothes with the colours the people wanted. He had but one solution: the same dye-stuff in a tub dyed different

12. *Nature of the Physical World*, p.29

clothes with different colours. Ask for green and a dip in the solution gave green. Ask for yellow and another dip gave yellow. One of the intelligent onlookers, when his turn came to ask for the colour of his choice, said: Dye my cloth with the colour of the dye-stuff in the tub! All the different colours—all the relative points of view—arise out of that Absolute and the Infinite which does not get affected thereby. And there is no contradiction between the different emanations, *from the point of view of the Absolute*, though there may be differences between them at *their own* relative level. And the intelligent man is he who chooses the Infinite—the *Source* of all relativity—who chooses the colour of the dye-stuff itself rather than the different colours.

Or, take the instance of Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa's sincere remonstrance before the Divine Mother: 'Mother, everybody says my watch alone is right and those of others are wrong. But in fact, Mother, none of them is right.' Doesn't this reflect, so graphically, Eddington's statement quoted earlier: 'Rightness is a blank label'

These little parables, coming out of the mouth of the modern Prophet of Harmony and Synthesis (*Samanvayācārya*) are simplistic (and therefore perspicuous) versions of the Principle of Relativity. And such a harmony can be brought about only by one who has direct and immediate (*Sākṣāt*, *Aparokṣāt*) access to *all* the frames of reference. And the Master Frame of Reference of such a one, the Frame of the man who lives under the tree, a Frame that includes and amalgamates all the possible frames of infinite variety, is the Frame of whom we call an Avatar or a Special Manifestation of the Divine. 'He comes not to destroy, but to fulfil.' He can roam at will from one frame to another and shift points of view in a flash, as Svāmī Vivekānanda often did. And such a Master Frame, of a Jesus, or a Buddha, or a Kṛṣṇa or a Ramakrishna, has been termed Bhāvamukha.¹³ A discussion of this is

13. For a detailed discussion of this concept, see *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa the Great*

beyond the scope of this article and we therefore refrain from developing this idea further. It may be mentioned here that only in the light of such an understanding can one reconcile the so-called contradictions in the teachings of Svāmī Vivekānanda or his lightning-like shifting of positions, sometimes diametrically opposite. And it is only in the light of such an understanding can one hope to get a glimpse of the minds of the powerful giant-waves of spirituality—the Avatars—who periodically appear on this earth for the redemption of mankind.

‘In the two words equilibrium and synthesis,’ said Romain Rolland, ‘the whole of Vivekananda’s constructive genius may be summed up.’¹⁴ And such an equilibrium is not a static equilibrium, where contradictory forces are at rest by annulling one another. On the contrary, it is a dynamic equilibrium in which there is an incessant activity, but the resultant effect is intense calm and peace and stillness without even a ripple of conflict. To quote Svāmī Vivekānanda:

Then arises the question: How can all these varieties be true? If one thing is true, its negation is false. How can contradictory opinions be true at the same time? This is the question which I intend to answer. But I will first ask you: Are all the religions of the world really contradictory? I do not mean the external forms in which great thoughts are clad. I do not mean the different buildings, languages, rituals, books, etc. employed in various religions, but I mean the internal soul of every religion. Every religion has a soul behind it, and that soul may differ from the soul of another religion; but are they contradictory? Do they contradict or supplement each other?—that is the question. I took up the question when I was quite a boy, and have been studying it all my life. Thinking that my conclusion may be of some help to you, I place it before you. I believe that they are not contradictory; they are supplementary. Each religion, as it were, takes up one part of the great universal truth, and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the great truth. It is, therefore, addition, not exclusion. That is the idea. System after system arises, each one embodying a great idea, and ideals must be added to ideals. And this

14. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekānanda and the Universal Gospel* (Calcutta: Advaita Āshrama, 1984), p.281

is the march of humanity. Man never progresses from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lesser truth to higher truth—but it is never from error to truth....

Then, again, we also know that there may be almost contradictory points of view of the same thing, but they will all indicate the same thing. Suppose a man is journeying towards the sun, and as he advances he takes a photograph of the sun, which he places before us. We see that not two are alike and yet, who will deny that all these are photographs of the same sun, from different standpoints? Take four photographs of this church from different corners; how different they would look, and yet they would all represent this church. In the same way, we are all looking at truth from different standpoints, which vary according to our birth, education, surroundings, and so on. We are viewing truth, getting as much of it as these circumstances will permit, colouring the truth with our own heart, understanding it with our own intellect, and grasping it with our own mind.¹⁵

Here we have Svāmī Vivekānanda declaring beautifully the relativity principle—the equality of all reference frames, by which is meant the lack of any definite criteria for preferring one to the other. And this is but a commentary, in modern language, on the ancient teaching of the Rishis of yore: *Ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti* (Truth is one, sages call It variously), *Nityo'nityānām cetanaś-cetanānām eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān* (one who is the Eternal among the non-eternals, the Conscious Being among all the conscious beings, and being One satisfies the desires of many, etc.), *ne'ha nānāsti kiñcana* (There is absolutely no diversification, contradiction here), and so on. And it is the same truth that the *Samanvayācārya* (Prophet of Harmony), Śrī Kṛṣṇa, taught in the *Gītā*: 'Whoever comes to me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.'¹⁶ And it is the same truth that was experimented with, lived and preached with a thousandfold more emphasis, with an authority that can no longer be denied, by Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa the modern Prophet of Harmony and Synthesis: *Yato mat, tato path* (As

15. *Complete Works* 2:365-66

16. *Gītā* (4:11), quoted by Svāmī Vivekānanda in his famous address on 13 September 1893 at the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago. In Public Domain. Digitized by Muthulakshmi Research Academy

many faiths, so many paths), 'All faiths are true'.¹⁷ It is this doctrine that has been given an unshakable and deep-rooted scientific footing by Einstein. To display narrowness, fanaticism, bigotry and to claim superiority for one's own frame of reference is now not only irreligious, but also unscientific. By the same token, to swear by matter and deny religious and spiritual values fanatically, is not only irreligious but also unscientific. And in modern times, though it is 'prestigious' to be branded as an atheist, it is a dishonour to be dubbed unscientific! But there you are; there is no escape from Einstein's conclusions. Psychologically interpreted, they are the 'death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal', which Svāmī Vivekānanda spoke of years ago. Didn't he himself declare that it was given to him to preach the new gospel of harmony, that he 'was born for this' and it was left for him to do?¹⁸ And how wonderfully has Sister Nivedita, his disciple, summed it up in her 'Introduction' to the Complete Works of Svāmī Vivekānanda:

And yet this statement that his teaching holds nothing new is not absolutely true. It must never be forgotten that it was the Svāmī Vivekānanda who, while proclaiming the sovereignty of the Advaita Philosophy as including that experience in which all is one, without a second, also added to Hinduism the doctrine that Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Advaita are but three phases or stages in a single development, of which the last-named constitutes the goal. This is the part and parcel of the still greater and more simple doctrine that the many and the One are the same Reality perceived by the mind at different times and different attitudes; or as Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa expressed the same thing, 'God is both with form and without form. And He is that which includes both form and formlessness.'

It is this which adds its crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting-point, not only of East and West, but also of past and future. If the many and the One be indeed the same

17. *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa the Great Master*, p.602

18. Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I saw Him*, (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1983) p.201

Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.

This is the realization which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of Karma, not as divorced from, but as expressing Jñāna and Bhakti. To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard, and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him, there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality. All his words, from one point of view, read as a commentary upon this central conviction.¹⁹

Thinkers all over the world reiterate that 'mankind is now in one of its rare moods of shifting its outlook. The compulsion of tradition has lost its force. Revolution is not only in the air; it is in the hearts of men.'²⁰ Man everywhere is awakening to this message of harmony and acceptance. And he is slowly becoming aware that without such a doctrine his very survival is at stake. 'Hence is being preached the harmony of all noble ideas and ideals at the dawn of this great age. And this infinite and grand ideal that lay embedded and hidden in the ancient scripture and religion of India is being loudly proclaimed in society.'²¹ And the saving gospel of the preacher of harmony, Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa, whom Svāmī Vivekānanda called the 'founder of this new religion of the age, the refined manifestation of the ancient holy founders of the religions of the past'²², is slowly beginning to echo in every human heart all over the globe:

Is God's book finished?²³ Or is it still a continuous revelation going on? It is a marvellous book—these spiritual revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, and all other sacred books are but

19. *Complete Works*, Vol. I pp. XV-XVI

20. S. Radhākṛiṣṇan, *Occasional Speeches and Writings* (Govt. of India Publication, May 1956), p. 10

21. Svāmī Vivekānanda in 'Hindu Religion and Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa,' quoted in *The Great Master*, p. 326

22. *Ibid.*

23. Cf. Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa's Statement: 'Don't put any limitation upon God'

(*Bhagavad-gītā*, iii. 38, 39)

so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would leave it open for all of them. We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutation to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future.²⁴

24. *Complete Works*, 2:374

Appendix II

Bhāvamukha

In Appendix-I Svamī Ātmapriyānanda refers to the concept of Bhāvamukha, which he has left without much elucidation. As some understanding of this concept is essential for grasping the full implications of 'Relativity and Rāmakṛṣṇa', an attempt is made hereunder to set forth some of those implications.

The expression Bhāvamukha is unknown to our Vedāntic literature in Sanskrit. It is a term that Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa used to denote an experience of his that marked the close of his state of Unmodified Psychosis or Nirvikalpa Samādhi. He heard a disembodied voice commanding 'Remain in Bhāvamukha! For the spiritual enlightenment of man, remain in Bhāvamukha!' This commandment he heard on three occasions. Literally translated, this expression, Bhāvamukha means 'the Threshold or Gateway of the World of Becoming or Change'. In the state of Unmodified Psychosis, no cause and effect link between the changing and the unchanging states can be conceived. This is taken to mean sublation (Bādha) of all objectivity. Sublation means not mere non-consciousness of the world of change but the total non-existence of it even when it is perceived, just like that of the temporary illusion of a snake in the rope. But the Master's experience invalidates this concept of sublation. The changeless and the changeful are not contradictory and mutually exclusive. There is a border line, which can be described as the 'Immense-I-Sense' standing as the source and the sustaining and dissolving ground of the whole world of change.

The metaphysics of this conception consists in the acceptance of the Supreme Reality as Being-Will and not

as mere Being. Without Will, a mere Being is as good as Nihil or nothing. 'Will' makes Being 'Self-conscious' and 'Other-conscious'. Though Will can thus be distinguished it cannot be differentiated from Being, as they constitute one whole, as heat and light with fire.

All the diversities which we experience as the world systems and the conscious beings that inhabit them are the expressions of the Being-Will. Will is the involved and Being the uninvolved. The involvement does not in any way destroy the integrity and holistic nature of Being-Will, as our worldly logic based on the law of contradiction would dictate.

The manifestations of Being-Will have numerous dimensions. A dimension is a plane of consciousness which reveals to those who have got the 'proper receiver' a set of conscious and unconscious existences appropriate to that dimension. The other dimensions that co-exist with our present dimension will not be within our perception with the help of our receivers. The innumerable dimensions which criss-cross one another without any mutual intrusion are the various Lokas (spheres), enumerated generally as fourteen, from Satyaloka to Pātāla. Each one set of fourteen Lokas is designated as a Brahmāṇḍa, and there are countless such Brahmāṇḍas ideating from the Being-Will.

Now, to go back to that 'Immense I-sense'. The acme of spiritual experience according to the classical Advaita philosophy is the state of Unmodified Psychosis, technically known as Nirvikalpa samādhi. One who attains this state may get back the relative consciousness of the manifold world of 'Becoming'. Such a person is called a Jīvan-Mukta, one free from the body even while he lives. The classical Advaita does not give any direct or universally acceptable explanation of how, if sublation of the manifold has been realised in the Unmodified Psychosis, the ego-sense and manifold consciousness of the Jīvan-Mukta are restored. The only explanation given is that it is the momentum of

Prārabdha Karma (the quantum of 'operative Karma') that leads to this restoration. It is further illustrated by an example from archery. The archer has a large number of arrows in his quiver. He may have one in his hand also; and another that he had he has already released. The released arrow will not stop until it strikes the target. Just like that, at the close of the momentum of Prārabdha only, does the body fall, whether in the case of an enlightened man or an unenlightened one, with this difference that the latter will get continuing embodiments on account of the presence of Sañcita and Āgāmi Karmas in his case while the former will not have any more births as all of them, with the exception of Prārabdha, have been burnt up or destroyed by Enlightenment. Sañcita means 'stored up' like the arrows in the quiver and Āgāmi, the arrow in hand whose release is not compulsory unlike the arrow already released.

To a question in respect of whom this explanation is offered, the reply given is that it is offered only to such dull-witted persons as the questioner about the Jīvan-mukta's bodily existence. As far as the Jīvan-mukta himself is concerned, the body has already disappeared, and what the dull-witted persons call his body and its actions are only the projections of their own ignorance. With this position the classical Advaita philosopher is satisfied, while his critics are not. For in classical Vedānta any link for relating the Absolute and the Relative is not accepted, as these are contradictions. Such a First Cause is taken for granted only so long as the ideations called the Jīvas and the world systems require an explanation. When these are understood as sublated, no explanation for them is required, and so that First Cause also becomes irrelevant, it being a previously non-existent entity along with its supposed effects as the manifold.

Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa adopts a position entirely different from that of classical Advaita. If Karma, whether operative or

otherwise should really operate, there should be an Intelligent Principle behind it. For Karma in itself is Jaḍa, non-intelligent, and requires a mover. Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa finds this prime mover in what has been described as the 'Immense- I-sense' standing as the border line between the Absolute and the Relative world of the manifold. This border-line, the 'Immense-I-sense', is identical with the Will aspect of Being-Will, the Supreme Reality. The 'Immense- I-sense' is what the Master calls by the new name Bhāva-mukha, the Threshold of Relative Consciousness, by being poised in which the enlightened one is at the same time in touch with the Absolute and the Relative. The contradiction between the two does not exist in such a state of consciousness.

This state of consciousness is only found in Incarnations or Ādhikārikas (Commissioned Ones or Prophets). As attainment of Nirvikalpa Samadhi dissolves all links between the Relative and the Absolute there is no return for one who attains it. For, according to the Master, such a one's body may last for about twenty one days and then perish, as it has no ego to support it. So there can be no Jīvan-mukta other than Incarnations and Ādhikārikas (Commissioned Ones). They are also termed as 'Vijñānis' by the Master. The expression means those endowed with special or perfect knowledge i.e. the simultaneous knowledge of both the Changeless and the Changing. They are the expressions of the Divine Will and not of the Operative Karma (Prārabdha Karma). In fact they are not born like the Jīvas to reap the fruits of Karma at all. They have no self-interest of their own including salvation. They are the expressions of the Divine purpose of Redemption and are one with that Being-Will. The state of consciousness of such beings is what is called Bhāva-mukha, the Threshold of Relative consciousness, from where they function in the Relative world without breaking their link with the Absolute. In such functioning what supports them is not the ego-centred individual wills as in ignorant men, but

the 'Immense-I-sense' from which all ideations of the world-systems take place. What is denoted as 'Immense-I-sense' metaphysically, is psychologically termed by the Master as Bhāva-mukha and theologically as the Divine Mother.

The uniqueness of this state of Bhāva-mukha, to which reference is made in Appendix I, is that one in that state can at will get the appropriate receivers and switch on to any of the countless dimensions that bubble up from the 'Immense- I-sense' and exist simultaneously criss-crossing one another without any mutual infringement. This state is therefore illustrated by the example of a spider sitting in the centre of its web. It can go along with its own thread to any of the points included in its criss-crossing web.

When they are attuned to our level of consciousness, we find they can be at attunement with every state of society, from the least developed man to the most highly evolved, and share their characteristic experiences at will. Thus the Bhāva-mukha state enables the Vijñāni to be 'all things to all men' without any sense of contradiction. He can behave like the humblest of the humble when he is in the attitude of a devotee, but when he gets attuned to the 'Immense- I-sense' his behaviour will be different. He can then be a conduit of the power of that 'Immense-I-sense' and a centre of immense spiritual energy capable of transforming sinners into saints by his touch or an affirmation of his will. In Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa the Great Master this alternation between the devotee-mood and the saviour-mood has been veridically ascertained, as he was subject to the observation of scientifically trained men of very recent times who have recorded their observations in their writings.

We have already stated that the Master's experience eliminates the concept of sublation from his metaphysics. According to him, what happens in Unmodified Psychosis or Nirvikalpa Samadhi, is that the Divine mother, who is

also psychologically described as the Immense- I-sense, reveals Her own absolute nature. She cannot be sublated; She only holds the Attributive or Personal Aspect in abeyance when She bestows the Unmodified Psychosis. As far as the ordinary Jīvas are concerned, she cuts off the link with Her relative aspect and they attain the absolute state. In an analogy used by the Master, they are like the salt dolls that go to measure the salty ocean. Like such dolls, they do not return. The Incarnations and Ādhikārikas who are the expressions of Her will, regain a transformed ego, the ego of a spiritual teacher, and live in our plane of consciousness, but retaining the power to have the consciousness of the Absolute as also that of traversing through all the dimensions into which She has manifested in Her creative process. Such a state is called Bhāva-mukha, the Threshold of Relative Consciousness, by the Master.

Divine Forms

“Do you know what I mean? Satcidānanda is like an infinite ocean. Intense cold freezes the water into ice, which floats on the ocean in blocks of various forms. Likewise through the cooling influence of Bhakti, one sees forms of God in the Ocean of the Absolute. These forms are meant for the Bhaktas, the lovers of God. But when the Sun of Knowledge rises, the ice melts; it becomes the same water it was before — water above and water below, everywhere nothing but water!

“But you may say that for certain devotees God assumes eternal forms. There are places in the ocean where the ice doesn't melt at all.”

—*Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna P.191. Ed.1981*

The Bhakti-Vedanta systems of thought expounded in these pages along with the lives of their illustrious promulgators can provide... an alternative mould for spiritual aspirants who feel that Samsara is real, liberation must be real, and worship or meditation are not mock battles, and who therefore accept a God, not as provisional, but as the Ultimate Reality — merciful and gracious, the seat of all auspicious attributes — by whose grace alone one can be freed from the bondage of Samsara.

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